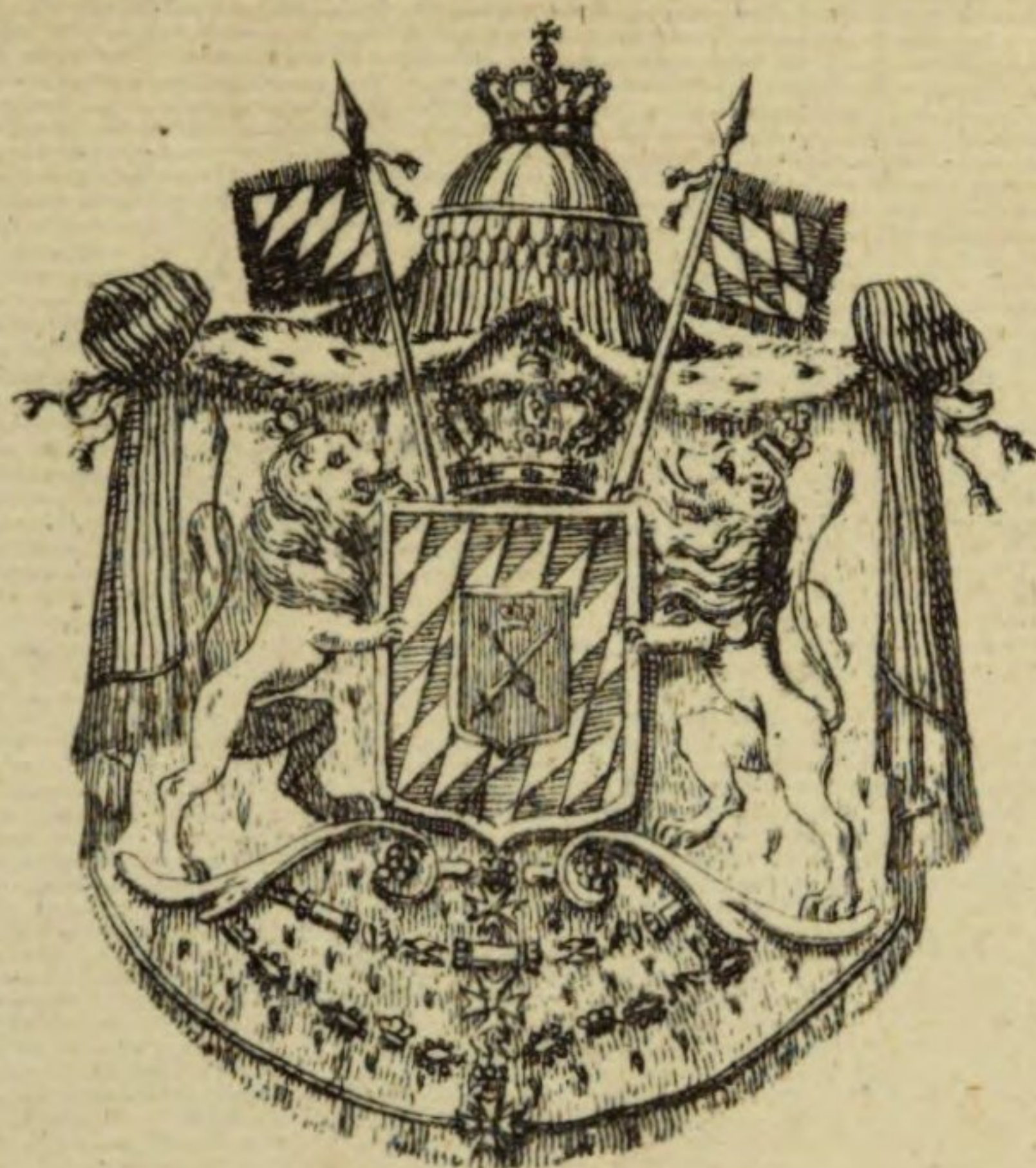




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THE

ANALYSIS

OF THE

RELIGION

OF THE CHRISTIAN

BY

JOHN H. WATSON

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A
DEFENCE
OF THE
ANCIENT FAITH,
IN FOUR VOLUMES;
OR
A FULL EXPOSITION
OF
The Christian Religion.
IN A SERIES OF
CONTROVERSIAL SERMONS.

BY THE REV. PETER GANDOLPHY,
Priest of the Catholic Church.

VOL. I.



LONDON :

Printed and published for the Author,
By KEATING, BROWN and KEATING, 38, Duke-street, Grosvenor-
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DEFENCE



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PREFACE.

OF all the subjects which can be presented to the mind of man, there is none so interesting, or so worthy of his attention, as RELIGION. It is Religion that opens our understandings to a knowledge of the Author of our existence, reveals to us the dispensations of his providence, and unfolds the awful destinies of man. Enlightened by her precepts and instructions, the soul is drawn to a love of virtue, and taught to expect her recompense in a future world. And while reason stands confounded and appalled at the disor-

ders of nature, aided by her we explain the apparent inconsistency of innocence oppressed and guilt triumphant, and learn to fear the just judgments of an avenging God.

But if one circumstance more than another, is calculated to shew the superexcellence and importance of this virtue over every other object and consideration in this world, it is when the curtain of death is drawing over all the plans, desires, and pursuits of this mortal life. Then, if man be in truth more than a shadow of greatness, if immortality be any thing but a phantom, its real worth is seen undisguised, and we confess the superior rank it should hold in the human estimation.

There undoubtedly exists in this country a strong bias in the mind to-

wards religion ; which is certainly characteristic of that sense and reflection for which the people have ever been so justly distinguished. This disposition may be observed in their love of religious novelty, in the strength of their prejudices, and in the number of their conventicles ; and though it may have given rise to fanaticism, the fault is less censurable than would be the opposite extreme.

On this account, I indulge the hope that the following work on RELIGION will be well received, and that it may contribute to increase the respect of my countrymen for the blessing of Christianity. If I have been too sensible to the influence of zeal, I trust the uprightness of my intentions will prove a sufficient excuse, and that the error of a warm heart will be forgiven. As truth should ever be the end of every religi-

ous publication, my endeavour has been, to place the subject in the plainest light, and to discuss it with the most undisguised frankness and candid simplicity.—Therefore, if in any thing I have deviated from the line of just or fair representation, my earnest wish is, that some friendly hand will point it out for correction. I propose no other design by this work, than to diffuse the knowledge of the true God among my BRITISH COUNTRYMEN, and to assist them *to worship him in spirit and in truth.* Happy indeed shall I feel, if my labours contribute to that object. *Yet not to us, O Lord, but to thy name give glory.*

SERMON I.

ON THE NECESSITY OF REVELATION.

*The fool hath said in his heart there is no
God.* Psal. xiii. 1.*

AMONG the variety of irreligious opinions, which originate in the presumption of man, there is none more frequent at the present day, nor more strongly featured with arrogance and pride, than the one which this language involves; what need have I of revelation—have I not reason for my guide†? Vain, presumptuous, and

* The quotations of scripture are all taken from the Edinburgh edition of the Catholic English Bible, printed in the year 1805.

† The books which may be recommended on this subject, as replete with learning and instruction, are The Philosophical Catechism, by the Abbé Feller—Deism self-refuted, by Mons. Bergier—Leland's View of Deism—and the Helvean Letters.

deluded mortal! was reason wanting to thy species, when thy forefathers wandered in the darkness of that ignorant superstition which for ages overspread the face of the earth? When forgetful of the mighty God of heaven, nations placed their trust in the idols of their country?—When on the altars of Britain or Canaan, the blood of virgins and infants streamed to graven deities?—When the most shameful vices were honoured under the name of gods, and temples consecrated to incest and prostitution braved the light of day in the polished cities of Latium and Greece?—Was reason refused to those learned philosophers, who joined in a religion as absurd as it was impious, and as inimical to happiness, as it was revolting from every notion of virtue—who ignorant of the nature of God and the destination of man, speculated in systems, not less contradictory than imperfect, or finished with the delirium of atheism? Has reason been denied to those uncivilized

tribes, which form so great a portion of mankind, and thro' successive ages live strangers to every virtue—whose only religion is an inward dread of some imaginary deity, and though believing in a future state, know not whether it is to consist in a transmigration of souls, or the animal enjoyment of a temporal paradise? Has reason ever been wanting to them,—yet where will you find the example of one solitary tribe which, merely conducted by the lights of that faculty, have attained to the knowledge of the true God, or the nature of their own destinies?

Indeed, it is particularly deserving of notice, that the very persons who have so presumptuously denied the necessity of revelation, have themselves taken advantage of the general instruction which it has brought to mankind; yet, by a strange inconsistency, instead of permitting reason to acknowledge the happy consequence of this divine interference of Providence, are only bent on opposing the conviction and subverting the sentiment of the almost universal world: an ungenerous, not to

say treacherous demeanour, of which we have not only numerous examples in religion, but also in the daily scenes of common life; wherein men profiting by the lights and instructions of others, often pretend that they should have decided as wisely without them. We frequently fancy, for instance, that had we lived in the days of Cæsar, we should have written our thoughts on paper with a quill, taught the Romans the art of printing, and have introduced among them many of the more newly discovered luxuries of life. Even antecedent to Columbus, we should have been certain of finding new Indies in the western ocean, and have judged it possible to circumnavigate the world.—Such are the sentiments, my Brethren, we often entertain, without adverting, that had we really lived at those periods, there is no reason to suppose, that we should have differed in our ideas from other men; since in all likelihood, these discoveries, for which the world is now so thankful, originated in some chance thought, which perhaps might never have crossed our own imaginations.

Be cautious then, my Friends, nor pretend to say that you have no need of revelation.—We will consider, if you please, what mankind has been without it, that you may judge of your own particular case, by that of the rest of the community—for where is the reason to regard you as exceptions to the whole human race?

My Brethren, if we take a minute view of the world, at any period before the christian æra, we shall distinctly perceive that the grossest ignorance, depravity and superstition, pervaded every class of mankind, and that exclusive of the Jewish people, who with difficulty were kept to the worship of the true God, every nation had plunged into the most horrid and shameful idolatry. Men gave full indulgence to their passions; and if there existed a check, it only proceeded from the arm of the civil law. To be sure virtue was always respected; but how seldom found! Pagan writers extol chastity,

when occasionally displayed by an Alexander or a Scipio, praise the noble principles of Cato, and fondly dwell on the conjugal attachment of the wife of Hector; but connect them with such a mass of inconsistencies, such encomiums on libertinism, infidelity and injustice, (to the degree of even deifying these vices), that we are absolutely at a loss to say which they intend most to commend;—nay, if I must close the comparison, I should be rather inclined to think, that by thus distinguishing their Gods, they designed them as examples for the conduct of men. This observation stands proved by incontestable facts, since we have not one pagan writer exempt from the fault. Can we then be surprised, that vice should have had a general influence on men's ideas, and that impelled by their own corrupt passions, they should have taken leave of virtue, and rushing forward in a mass, have sunk into a state of excessive blindness of understanding, and depravity of heart?

My Brethren, the deformity of human nature was such as few will at present believe ; and so universal that the Jewish people formed but a single national exception. If we consider our own ancestors, whether British or Saxon, we observe a people barbarous in their domestic habits rendered still more barbarous by their religious rites. The human victims which they offered in sacrifice to their Gods, were immolated in a manner more horrid than was practised by any other nation of the world. In the solitude of a grove, the former erected a huge and gigantic figure of wood, in which they placed their victims, and then surrounding it with fire, joined their priest in dancing and shouting to the screams of the sufferers. The Saxons, on the other hand, bent their knees to the idols of Woden and Thor*, while their ideas of future happiness and reward extended not beyond the expecta-

* After whom were named Wednesday and Thursday.

tion of being allowed a seat in the hall of their Deity, and to drink out of the skulls of their slaughtered enemies. The movement of a star, the roaring of thunder, and the appearance of the entrails of beasts, were the equivocal signs by which their God was supposed to express his pleasure.

To the melancholy picture of religion, which the histories of ancient Gaul, Spain and Germany furnish, the far stretched empires of Egypt, Carthage, Phenicia, Syria and India additionally contribute a combination of the grossest absurdities and the most revolting rites,—whilst it seems to have been the whole study of their governments to preserve and augment the popular delusion. Still as divination and sacrifice were the foundations of all their systems, it clearly evinces how eagerly man sought to learn what he could not discover by the aid of reason, or any natural lights—in other words, how inherent it was in him to expect revelation by some extraordinary means, and how

firmly established in the human heart was the persuasion of the necessity of sacrifice as an atonement for sin.

My Brethren, such is the verified account we possess of men and manners at a very early period; which, like other efforts of reason, must be supposed to have changed with their advances in civilization. But no; notwithstanding their progress in science, in policy, and every ornamental accomplishment was methodical, they were stationary in religion, and in a manner naturalized to all the absurd inconsistencies and impieties of their heathenish worship. To certify this it will be sufficient to instance the examples of the Greeks and Romans, who reached a point of civilization, which perhaps no other nation has since exceeded. Their skill in every branch of learning, their knowledge of government, and their acquaintance with the refined arts, have made them the teachers and the masters of mankind, and from the very wreck

of their genius we draw the most perfect copies of chaste elegance and majestic grandeur.

Yet these are the people who surpassed all others in religious extravagance.—It was they who offered incense to a prostitute Venus and an incestuous Jupiter;—they who worshipped Mercury as the god of robbers.—They, in fine, who blended devotion with the amours of Mars and the revels of Bacchus. Nay, to complete this climax of pagan abominations, Rome carried her idolatrous infatuation so far, as to erect, in the days of her brightest glory, a temple to all the gods of the universe:—thus adding the infamous superstitions of other nations to her own. Well, then, may we apply to her the words of St. John in the Apocalypse: *Come, and I will shew thee the condemnation of the great harlot, who sitteth upon many waters* *, or, as he afterwards explains,

* Chap. xvii. ver. 1.

ruleth many nations ; with whom the kings of the earth have committed fornication ; and they who inhabit the earth have been made drunk with the wine of her iniquity.

But you will sensibly ask ; and was this depravity really universal ? My Brethren, in a moral sense it was ; for though a few of their wisest and most enlightened philosophers seemed to hesitate in assenting to the delusion, yet for want of a determinate point to which they might adhere, they reluctantly practised what they had been taught by their fathers, and followed the infatuated multitude. I can produce as an example the eloquent Cicero*, who thus writes to Brutus concerning the nature of the gods : “ As there are many
 “ things in philosophy but imperfectly
 “ explained, so the inquiry into the na-
 “ ture of the gods is most difficult and
 “ obscure, as you well know, Brutus ;
 “ and yet most interesting to the under-

* Lib. ii.

“ standing, and necessary in settling re-
 “ ligion. On which, however, there are
 “ such various and contradictory opinions
 “ among the most learned men, that it
 “ ought to be a strong proof, that wisdom
 “ is the spring and the principle of phi-
 “ losophy ; and that academicians have
 “ prudently withheld their assent from
 “ objects so uncertain—nevertheless, wor-
 “ ship is to be paid to them.”

Reasoning on the immortality of the
 soul, the same philosopher writes *: “ As
 “ you desire, I will explain it to the best
 “ of my power ; not, however, with the
 “ certainty with which Pythian Apollo
 “ would have spoken, but as an humble
 “ individual following probable conjec-
 “ tures. For I have not the means of
 “ doing more than to state what ap-
 “ pears to me probable.” He also writes :
 “ I know not how it is ; but whilst I am
 “ reading, I assent to the arguments
 “ which are brought against the immor-

* Tusc. lib. 1.

"tality of the soul. Yet, when I have
 "laid my book aside, and begin to reason
 "with myself on the immortality of souls,
 "I can no longer believe that they are to
 "die." Seneca himself says, speaking on
 this subject: "That in giving credit to
 "the judgments of great men, he assented
 "to them, rather as promising than prov-
 "ing*." Even Socrates, who had
 spent his whole life in philosophical re-
 searches, spoke doubtfully of a future
 state in the last conference he held with
 his friends; which gave Tertullian occa-
 sion to remark: "That all the wisdom of
 "this philosopher proceeded from an ar-
 "tificial composure of mind, not from
 "the conviction of having discovered
 "truth."

* Cicero speaking of Plato, says: "In his works no-
 "thing is affirmed, though there is much said on both sides."
 In his Hortensius, cited by St. Austin, he also says: "That
 "we were born to suffer punishment on account of some
 "offences committed in another life." But in what life?
 "Revelation," answers even the impious Boyle, "can only
 "relieve us from this doubt."

Now we may observe with Cicero : “ If
 “ this (immortality) is not to be con-
 “ sidered certain, man must be ignorant
 “ of what most interests him ; and whe-
 “ ther it be denied, or only called in
 “ question, there must be an end to all
 “ piety, all virtue, all religion ; there
 “ must follow great confusion and dis-
 “ turbance in life ; there can be no faith,
 “ no society, no justice amongst men.”

The great Plato himself makes this strik-
 ing avowal : “ In the midst of our uncer-
 “ tainties, the only part for us, is patient-
 “ ly to wait, until some one comes to
 “ instruct us in the manner we ought to
 “ conduct ourselves towards the gods
 “ and men. He who will teach us this,
 “ will truly interest himself for us. May
 “ he come, then, says he ; I am disposed
 “ to do all he shall prescribe, and I hope
 “ that he will make me better.” There
 cannot be a doubt, my Brethren, but that
 Cicero, Plato, and Socrates, had a know-
 ledge of the true God through their ac-

quaintance with the Jews, as their writings testify *; yet they joined in the idolatrous worship of their respective nations, and laid it down as a fundamental maxim, that nothing should ever be changed in the established religion of a country;—and we read that Socrates, at the approach of death, begged his friends to sacrifice a cock, as the accomplishment of a vow which he had made to Esculapius.—Plato makes a profession of never speaking openly of the true God, for fear of exposing so great a truth to derision;—and Cicero declares, that a man must have lost his senses to attempt a reform; nay, “that it is proper for nations to be deluded by religion.”

What wonder, then, that the real morality of these sages was defective? Will you believe, my Friends, that it was the school of philosophy which taught that

* Plato's idea, that an equilateral triangle was the most perfect emblem of the divinity, is an evident proof of this.

the exposition of obscene pictures and statues was pleasing to the gods? which maintained the lawfulness of fornication, and tolerated an unnatural commerce between father and daughter, mother and son? Will you believe that it was a Plato who advised the abolition of marriage, in lieu of which he recommended a community of wives?—that it was he who approved the murderous exposition of ill-formed infants, and in forbidding drunkenness, excepted the feasts of Bacchus?—Are we to wonder, then, that these learned men should have had no authority over the minds of the people*? “Do you “think,” says Cicero†, (who undoubtedly was in some degree an exception to the rest) “that any paid attention to the moral instructions of these philosophers, “except the few by whom they were

* If the best criterion to judge of a tree be its fruit, what are we to think of those masters, from the flagitious lives and characters of their disciples?

† Tusc. lib. ii.

“ made, written, or defended? Where
 “ amongst these philosophers is that indi-
 “ vidual to be found, who is as moral and
 “ principled as reason requires? who
 “ views his lessons as the only rule of his
 “ life, and not as the display of his wis-
 “ dom? who restrains himself, and ob-
 “ serves his own maxims? How many do
 “ we know who indulge their lusts?”

Such is the testimony of perhaps the most moral philosopher of antiquity; and in all this we are supported by the evidence of St. Paul, in the first chapter of his Epistle to the Romans.

From this cursory view of ancient Greece and Rome, I am eager to lead you, my Brethren, to a survey of China and Japan,—nations which date their existence far back in the history of the world, and which for ages closed every avenue to the introduction of the gospel. Characterized as a quick and ingenious people, from whom we have received many useful parts and branches of commerce,

they are instructed in philosophy, have a natural love of science, and are no ways deficient in the habit of legislating—yet these nations, whose origin is fixed by many a thousand years before the reign of Christ, and which shone as a lettered people, when Europe was rude and uncivilized, have never emerged from their first pagan idolatry. The scene which religion there unfolds to us, is truly one from which the mind turns with horror and disgust, or remains stupified with astonishment at the degraded and abject state of the human understanding left to its own resources. With the exception of those whom Christianity has enlightened, the enormous population of those empires, daily pay their adoration to the idols of their mock gods, while the Creator of the universe is neither known nor mentioned.

These deities, which correspond in character to those of ancient Greece and Rome—are generally distinguished by the same passions, and in all probability, like

them, were originally borrowed from Egypt *,—which according to history seems to have been the grand school of pagan theology. Their religion is composed of a number of heathenish rites, to which they add an idolatrous worship of their deceased ancestors. Every house contains some little family idols, which are invoked in affliction, and in whose honour is exercised every species of gross superstition; such as asking them their wants, and presenting them with food, raiment and money. Here also is again tolerated the murderous exposition of infants, one of the unhappy consequences of breaking through the law of nature, by allowing a plurality of wives.

Is it then, my Brethren, possible, that nations which boast of being the most ancient and illustrious in the world, which certainly stand high in political and phy-

* According to some writers, from the Chaldeans and Persians, descendants of Sem.

sical importance, should be so far blinded by prejudice and degraded by passion, that the high and the low, the rich and the poor, involved in the same delusion, should even persecute unto death those who preach the religion of the true God? Oh! truly there must exist some latent enemy of that sacred name, who can instigate mankind, prodigally to prostitute religion to objects so unworthy, but refuse it to that BEING, who alone is so deserving of it. I know that the name of Confucius is often quoted as an exception to his pagan countrymen, and as an example of what reason can effect without the aid of revelation. It is true, the incoherent writings attributed to this ancient sage, contain much of the morality of nature; but it is also very questionable whether they are his own, since it is likewise true, to the refutation of our adversaries, that whoever attends to the loose and obscure manner in which religion is mentioned by this philosopher,

whose wisdom and virtue they would extol above that of Jesus Christ himself, will find reason to doubt whether he even believed in a God *.

* Whatever the sages of China, as well as the ancient philosophers have taught worthy of commendation, has been owing to the light of reason, in following which, they have indeed acquired some *defective knowledge* of truth and its principles; whereas Christians, in so much as they know Jesus Christ, who is the truth itself, the sovereign reason and subsisting wisdom of God, have a perfect knowledge thereof. Nor is human wisdom any thing but folly, if it does not lead to him whose doctrine is to be found nowhere else but in the scriptures, which have the character of the Divinity stamped upon them; a doctrine, to which every man who has not a mind to be led away with vain reasonings ought inviolably to adhere, as to the pure foundation of truth.

The Chinese sages have, I repeat, known some truths; but neither they, nor the ancient philosophers, so much cried up, ever knew them all.—In the Christian law alone consummate righteousness is to be found; nor can any arrive at true wisdom, but by embracing its rules and putting them in practice.

If the Chinese philosophers have sometimes treated of humility, the very name of which was unknown to the pagan sages, it appears that they understood nothing more thereby than that outward respect which we ought to have for one another, consisting in a certain composure of the

My Brethren, in this review, which I have taken of mankind, I have not noticed the state of the world previous to the general deluge, when, according to Moses, *all flesh had corrupted its way upon the earth*, and thus brought upon itself that dreadful vengeance of heaven;—I have not adverted to the heathenish nations of Africa, to the pagan inhabitants of the northern pole, or to the history of America, before the star of Christianity rose

countenance, peculiar postures of the body, such as falling on the knees, or prostrate on the ground; certain marks of submission and obedience paid to parents, magistrates, and all persons in authority; but internal humility, which teaches to humble our hearts before God, to acknowledge our faults, not to be presumptuous, nor attribute any thing to our own strength, is only to be learned, as St. Austin observes, from the doctrine and actions of Jesus Christ, who tells us, *Learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart*; who being infinitely great made himself little to come to us; who having no sin of his own to blot out or expiate, submitted even to death and the cross. He only was capable of teaching and making us love a virtue so sublime and little known, which however is the basis of all other virtues. *Père Du Halde, pref. pag. vi. See also Lettres edifiantes et curieuses.*

to that continent, but have confined myself to those great examples which bear forcibly on the question before us, and speak distinctly to every understanding. I have taken no unfair advantage of mankind ; I have considered them individually and in the mass.—I have viewed them in their savage as well as uncivilized state ; and as no instance can be named in the annals of history, of any people or nation emerging by themselves from idolatry and vice, the conclusions we must draw from such evidence, are—first, that it needed an extraordinary light and assistance, to reduce men to the knowledge, the esteem, and the practice of virtue :—2dly, that without such aid, mankind would still be sunk in all the ignorance and errors of their forefathers.

Indeed, we have the strongest testimony of facts on our side ; for virtue, true piety, and social happiness, have ever followed the progress of the gospel ; whilst falsehood and superstition have fled before it.

It is by the testimony of the prophets, and the preachings of Christian missionaries alone, that every tribe and nation has been successively enlightened and instructed in religion ; and I challenge any one to name the most insignificant village, which, in the long run of six thousand years, has been brought to the worship of the true God by any other instrument. I know there is a class of mortals calling themselves philosophers, who pretend to be exceptions to the general rule ; men who stand in no need of revelation, maintaining that the light of reason alone would enable them to discern their duty to God and their fellow creatures. The religion of nature, they say, is the religion of man. In reply, then, the question here is not, whether the religion of nature be the religion of man, but whether man ever adhered to, or having abandoned the religion of nature, could have ever been brought back to it without a supernatural help ?—Now where is the philosopher, who

will answer in the affirmative? If we are to reason from analogous facts, which is the only rule for our decision, the negative is decidedly in my favour.

But the strength of the philosopher's argument reposes on his own extraordinary powers. My reason, he says, suggests to me, that there is a supreme God, whom I must worship and respect—that I have a soul which cannot die, and that divine justice must punish or reward it as it deserves.—My Brethren, is it not evident that the same discovery might have occurred to these same savage and pagan nations I have been just describing? How came it, then, that it did not? Was it because this individual is gifted with stronger talents than were conferred upon any of those millions? Or was it not because he had the help of revelation to direct and fix his ideas? Which, I repeat, is the same as to allow a man to light you to his door, and then to tell him that you had no occasion for his lamp.

In conclusion, therefore, if there be one of this description in this assembly, I will be bold enough to say to him, that had he been born among the ancient British or Saxons, education would, I apprehend, have taught him to join in their impious rites:—had he been instructed by the Greeks or Romans, he would have worshipped a Jupiter or a Venus, with the disciples of Socrates and Plato:—and had he learnt his alphabet in pagan China, instead of Christian Europe, he would have restricted his religion to his family idols, and the gods of his country, without ever knowing the God of the Universe, and the destinies of his own soul.

Oh reason ! oh philosophy ! fly then to the embrace of religion, and offer her the tribute of a pious and grateful homage. —When ye were the sport of superstition, she sought ye in your wanderings, and led ye to the sanctuary of truth, peace, and virtue. Like a bright light, she burst upon your darkness, dissipating those er-

rors in which for ages ye had been involved—she shewed ye the beginning and end of man. Yet pride has made ye raise against her your rebellious arms ; oh return then once more into her service ; her yoke is sweet, and her burthen light. Return, and she will break those chains which now surround your trophies ; she will remove those thorns which are interwoven with your laurels ; and crown ye with glory through never ending ages. Amen.



SERMON II.

ON THE EVIDENCE OF A NEW DISPENSATION.

And I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and between thy seed after thee, in their generations by a perpetual covenant ;—and thou therefore shalt keep my covenant, and thy seed after thee in their generations. These words were addressed by God to Abraham, and are read in the Book of Moses, *Gen. xvii. 7. 9.*

THERE are two particular points on which I would fix the attention of every individual who enters on the study of the relations which subsist between God and man :—first, that the eternal happiness of man was the grand design of God in the creation of this world :—2dly, that divine justice has not absolutely pardoned guilt,

but accepted the atonement of a just and adequate satisfaction. My Friends, these two doctrinal truths assumed as first principles, should be ever present to us in all our religious inquiries, discussions, and contemplations, since they will do much towards opening the understanding to a right conception of the ways and proceedings of God. While they instruct us in the simplicity of natural religion, they will enable us to comprehend the utility of supernatural institutions, and prepare our minds for the reception of a revealed dispensation, grounded on the satisfactory atonement of a God. They will moreover encourage man to repose an entire confidence in his Creator, and determine him to allow this divine Benefactor to select for himself, not only the mode of discharging the debt of original guilt, but to prescribe the means of applying the merits of that satisfaction to our subsequent necessities. My object then, this day, will be to prepare a ground-work in your understandings

for the admission of such mysteries and truths, as shall be afterwards laid before you in regular order, as the revealed dispensations of God.

My Friends, it must be evident to the weakest capacity, that a God infinitely powerful and infinitely wise cannot be confined to any particular dispensation, but must, in his concerns with man, be at liberty to trace for himself that line of conduct, which in his wisdom he may see most to his own honour and the advantage of his creature.—Consequently, under no obligation of ruling himself by nature's laws (which for the wisest ends he established at the creation), he is privileged, as Lord of the universe, to reverse or pass them by, whenever any object shall call for that exercise of power.—He who gave boundaries to the sea, can overwhelm with a deluge the highest mountains.—He who placed water in the clouds, can make it flow from the solid rock ;—he who first breathes life into the infant, can reanimate

the dead. The one is an act of his providence, strictly according to nature; that is, agreeable to the established course of things; the other is a supernatural work, out of the regular order. Thus it is he, who naturally multiplies that corn in the ground, which, if he chooses, he can also supernaturally multiply in the hand. In short, there are myriads of ways, in which God may deal out his dispensations to men; and infinite is the variety of objects and effects which he is capable of presenting to the human mind.

Admitting the desire and expectation, therefore, of a divine revelation, which seem to have been universal among mankind, and which to all appearance were grounded on the promise of God to our first parent, THAT THE SEED OF THE WOMAN SHOULD ONE DAY CRUSH THE HEAD OF HER SEDUCER;—in that state of mind, I repeat, would it have been right, to point out to God the mode to which he was to confine himself, in thus extending redemption

and new blessings to his creatures? My Friends, is it not the height of folly, or rather is it not a mad presumption in any one to pretend to reason us and God into a knowledge of what ought to be the nature of his divine revelations and dispensations to men? Is it not an arrogance surpassing all bounds, for any one to say: Thou hadst wisdom sufficient to create the universe out of nothing;—in this thou hast truly displayed thy omnipotence: but since thou wilt continue to manifest thyself a God; since thou wilt instruct fallen man in the ways of virtue, and make him a favourite child of heaven, I will take upon myself to join issue with thee, in deciding upon what is best, and most suited to HIS circumstances and THY honour. And, if associated in the business of sanctifying the human race, my reason will of course interfere, whenever thy determinations are at variance with the laws of nature.

Is it not, I say, the excess of insolence and presumption, for any one thus to ad-

dress the Creator? Yet this is what he is guilty of, who attempts to lay down rules for the Almighty.—This is what is daily exhibited by those who pretend to confine the more recent dispensations of God to the religion of nature, and constitute human reason that supreme tribunal, to which are referred the defects, the improbabilities, and impossibilities, with which they charge the divine revelations of God. It is what is hourly practised by those philosophers who labour to reason against evidence and facts;—who have drawn a circle for their Creator, and say, within this thou shalt move, but beyond it thou shalt not pass. Nature is the principle on which thou hast begun, and with nature shalt thou terminate. Oh! insignificant mortals, vile reptiles, in comparison with an infinite God! is it thus that ye stand up in opposition to your Creator? To you nature has assigned six feet of stature, and dare you presume to measure the height of the farthest star? Ye cannot

explain to me the sense of pain, nor how ye came by an immortal soul; and are ye qualified to become the counselors, the advisers, and the judges of God *? Methinks I see some of you startle

* One of the most valuable effects of genuine philosophy, writes the elegant Mr. Stewart, is to remind us of the limited powers of the human understanding, and to revive those natural feelings of wonder and admiration, at the spectacle of the universe, which are apt to languish in consequence of long familiarity. The most profound discoveries which are placed within the reach of our researches lead to a confession of human ignorance; for while they flatter the pride of man, and increase his power, by enabling him to trace the simple and beautiful laws by which physical events are regulated, they call his attention at the same time, to those general and ultimate facts, which bound the narrow circle of his knowledge; and which, by evincing to him the operation of powers, whose nature must for ever remain unknown, serve to remind him of the insufficiency of his faculties to penetrate the secrets of the universe. Wherever we direct our inquiries; whether to the anatomy or physiology of animals, to the growth of vegetables, to the chymical attractions and repulsions, or to the motions of the heavenly bodies; we perpetually perceive the effects of powers, which cannot belong to matter. To a certain length we are able to proceed; but in every research, we meet with a line which no industry nor ingenuity can pass. It is a line too

at the charge ; I will repeat it, then, ye are the men ; and if you will permit me to expose the proceedings which give rise to your errors, I will state the reason why the same talents, and the same learning which form the Christian, should likewise reform the infidel, that common sense may judge between us.

My Friends, in the pursuit of knowledge, at the very outset, we take two different courses. The philosopher plunges immediately into the study of matter ; and enamoured with nature and his own little discoveries, lays it down as a principle, that God

which is marked with sufficient distinctness ; and which no man now thinks of passing, who has just views of the nature and object of philosophy. It forms the separation between that field which falls under the survey of the physical inquirer, and that unknown region, of which, though it was necessary that we should be assured of the existence, in order to lay a foundation for the doctrines of natural theology, it hath not pleased the Author of the universe to reveal to us the wonders in this infant state of our being. It was, in fact, chiefly by tracing out this line that Lord Bacon did so much service to science. *Elements of Philosophy, page 88.*

in all his operations must submit to her direction. The Christian, on the other hand, first seeks, finds and studies its Author, and then descending from that sublime contemplation to the works of nature, discovers the traces of infinite wisdom and power throughout, and justly observes that nature is directed by God, and not God directed by nature. The former clinging to matter by something like brutish instinct, either entirely rejects as delusive, or gives a natural interpretation to the most unequivocal, and best established proofs of every supernatural interposition, or dispensation of providence. Whereas the latter, connecting in one view the promises, motives and designs of God, combined with human circumstances, gratefully accepts his dispensations when published with the supernatural evidence on which they rest; under the idea that the laws and the course of nature may be by him suspended, without forming a

rational ground of argument against the truth of his word *.

My Friends, from this consideration of the possibility of a divine, supernatural dispensation to man, I shall now proceed to show you that it has actually taken place, both in the instance of that divine covenant which God entered into with Abraham, as also in the subsequent promulgation of the Jewish law. For whether they simply existed in the light of mysterious signs and prophetic figures, or whether the faithful observance of them was to be productive of a

* The great works of God are nature and religion.—They who employ nothing but reason to direct their researches, naturally mistake the blessings of the Divinity for the Divinity itself—hence IDOLATRY. We who use every means natural and preternatural to arrive at truth, see first the external works of an almighty hand in nature, and adore OMNIPOTENCE :—2dly, hear from others and feel in ourselves the operations of infinite justice and love in the fall of Adam, and the death of Jesus—and believe—RELIGION. It is the natural consequence of extensive knowledge, to abate our confidence; while impudence, dogmatism, and vain and visionary speculation are the genuine offspring of ignorance.

spiritual effect, they are justly to be regarded as supernatural dispensations. With the law of nature they have no connexion, nor is it less evident to reason, that galling and restrictive as they were on liberty, they never would have been received, cherished, and respected by an entire people, had they not carried with them a sure testimony of divine origin.

Here we are immediately led by the subject before us, to decide on the character of the books of Moses, books which give a detailed history of those events, and solemnly testify, that they were grounded on the special revelations of God, miraculously preached and confirmed in the face of multitudes *. My Brethren,

* As a counterpoise to the miracles of Moses and the prophets, infidels are fond of urging the miracles of the Egyptian magicians, and call upon us to say, why God in his justice permitted them thus to mislead Pharaoh and his people.—To this we answer, that if they were misled, it was because they chose to be so.—However wonderful were the signs exhibited by the magicians, the miracles of Moses were always still more astonishing, and proved the superior power of that Being in whose name he acted.—

the great importance of the Mosaic history to revealed religion in general and particular, has been too well known to infidels and believers, to allow either of them to be silent upon it. The Christian views it as the first rampart of his faith, within which he entrenches himself; and the unbeliever sees that he must subvert the old before he can venture to attack the evidence of the New Testament. It is on this ground then that I am ready to meet the sceptical unbeliever this day, and whoever falls, let him fall to rise no more.

My Friends, after attentively examining all the arguments of these doughty adversaries of revelation, I find that they have nothing to advance against the simple and dignified testimony of this history

Thus when in imitation of Aaron's rod, the rods of the magicians were changed into serpents, Aaron's rod devoured their rods:—besides, like all other magicians, they used secret arts, whereas Moses employed none.—In the same manner modern Christians may be deluded by the tricks and sophisms of philosophers, but it is always in opposition to stronger evidence—and thus the justice of God always triumphs.

upheld by facts, but flimsy raillery, sophistical reasoning, and objections drawn from improbabilities. One styles it the work of a romance writer—another of an enthusiast, and a third of a madman. But, my Friends, it is well known, that insult, ridicule and abuse, will never amount to argument, or proof, in the judgment of a rational being. Hume undertakes the overthrow of revelation, by more sublime reasoning, and in order to strike at the great miracle of Christ's resurrection, affirms that as we have not what he is pleased to term the experience of miracles in ourselves, we have no means of ascertaining the very possibility of miracles at all ; since we can never be certain of the existence of any thing of which we have not personal experience *. To establish this reasoning,

* Hume's objection to miracles is refuted by himself:—for upon what does the evidence of past facts rest, but upon the present evidence of those who witnessed the facts in question, and communicated this present testimony of their senses to their cotemporaries—they to others—others to us—who give credit to what they say from our own daily, per-

my Friends, is the object of the philosophical essays of this writer; and labouring, like a second Hercules, with it he hopes to lay prostrate all the evidence of Jews and Christians. But what does this mighty argument tend to prove? far too much, his very friends will allow. It goes to prove that you are uncertain of the existence of any person, city, or country which you have not seen; that every death or event is doubtful which you have not witnessed; that history is fabulous and romantic, and that juridical evidence is false and unjust in its very principle. It goes to prove that you cannot even ascertain the existence of the man, who had the fol-

sonal, present *experience*, that the consonant testimony of a collection of nations or individuals is always more certain, than the testimony of any of our own private senses. Can a blind man rationally doubt of the existence of colours, merely because he has no experience of their nature? All the arguments of Hume tend only to prove what we Christians admit as a first principle—I mean, that man could never have attained to a perfect notion of God, and religion, by the help of reason alone.

ly to conceive such an argument,—that every effect in nature is doubtful where your own experience does not interpose ; in short, that human testimony is an empty nothing.

Such is the baseless reasoning to which the great and admired Mr. Hume has had recourse to verify his pompous promise, “ of reconciling profound inquiry with clearness, and truth with novelty—to undermine the foundations of an abstruse philosophy, which, he says, seems to have served hitherto only as a shelter to superstition, and a cover to absurdity and error;” this was the silvered bait he displayed, whilst his real object was to strike at the root of revealed religion, and to substitute his own false, miserable, and sophistical arguments in its place. Oh ! if this be called Philosophy, give me the sense of the upright peasant, whose manly thoughts reflect honour on himself and his Creator, and prove preferable to volumes of such fallacious reasoning.

You are satisfied I doubt not, my Friends, in contradiction to Hume, that history and human testimony are sufficient to establish the certainty of events, and that daily experience proves the truth of this assertion. I do not mean that credit is due to every report and idle rumour, for there are, and may be often, necessary conditions wanting in the evidence;—but that when the testimony is complete, a fact may be rendered equally certain, as if we had experience of it ourselves, and even deserving of a stronger faith than if we had been the single witness.

Now the Mosaic history, independant of the only rational account it contains of the nations of the universe, and the early ages of the world, presents us with a series of connected events and proceedings bearing reference to an extraordinary dispensation on the part of God, attested by miraculous effects;—signs I add which clearly evinced the manifest concurrence and special ordination of the Almighty,

and which could not possibly be ascribed to any other power. The divine object throughout, was to preserve the knowledge and worship of the true God among the chosen descendants of Abraham;—to draw a line of separation between them and that portion of mankind, who, as I demonstrated in my last discourse, had universally plunged into vice and idolatry.—In short, to prepare men for the imparting of that second dispensation, which was intended to be of more general extent, and in which religion was to be published to the world in its most perfect form*. This being the grand object proposed, the means employed were such as could not fail to produce the desired effect; and Bollingbroke himself, speaking of them,

* The religion of Adam, of Noah, of the Jews and of the Christians, is but the same divine virtue supernaturally developed in its different stages.—When it is affirmed, therefore, of the patriarchs, that they lived under the law of nature, it is to be understood of a divine law, to which were not yet attached the obligation of those positive precepts superadded to it by Moses and Jesus Christ.

says*: “I know most intuitively, that no
 “ creature of the same nature as myself,
 “ and I presume the Israelites were human
 “ creatures, could resist the evidence of
 “ such revelations, such miracles, and
 “ such traditions as are recorded in the
 “ Bible:—that they must have terrified
 “ the most audacious, and convinced the
 “ most incredulous.”

It seems to me, therefore, that all the objections of these philosophers will be immediately silenced, if we can but establish the credit and correctness of the historian. To this effect, I must call your attention to two circumstances attending the account of these miracles, which are, first, that Moses never pretended to work them in any other name than that of God;—thus referring to him all the honour:—and secondly, that as he states them to have been wrought publicly, in the face of the Israelites and Egyptians, he gave the

* Vol. iv. page 223.

world a fair opportunity of collecting evidence against them, had it been possible. But independant of the circumstance, that no historian of antiquity ever appeared to contradict the statements of Moses, most of which stand corroborated by that class of writers, as well as general tradition, the narration in question carries with it such internal evidence of truth and divine character, that whether we consider the sublimity of the thought, the nobleness of expression, or the general uniformity of the whole, we cannot refuse it the homage of respect to which the sacred word of God is so justly entitled. And the Lord said to Moses : *Write for a memorial in a book**. And after Moses had wrote the words of this law in a volume, and finished it, he commanded the Levites who carried the ark of the covenant of the Lord, saying : *Take this book, and put it in the side of the ark of the covenant of the Lord your*

* Exod. xvii. 14.

God: that it may be there for a testimony.*

But if the letter only offer a silent evidence, facts will speak more loudly. Let the testimony, then, of known events be attended to ;—let the existence of the Jewish republic speak ;—let the steady attachment of that people to their law in their several captivities, explain itself ;—let the voice of a generation as numerous as the sands of the sea and the stars of the firmament be heard ;—let the dispersion of that extraordinary nation at this day be allowed as evidence in the cause before us ; and let their consentient declarations bear down the opposition of a few sceptic philosophers. My Friends, as the religion and history of that people were so completely interwoven with their civil constitution and government, that it was impossible to study the one without becoming acquainted with the other, so both

* Deut. xxxi. 24.

well conspired to promote the designs of God.—For the festivals which were kept in commemoration of their miraculous introduction into the land of Canaan, as also those which referred to the promulgation of their law, formed a part of their state as well as religious polity, and clearly demonstrate that the one was coeval with the other.

If we advert to their feast of the tabernacles*, does it not tell us that their fathers had once dwelt under tents? If we enquire the meaning of the Pasch, shall we not be answered, *it is the victim of the passage of the Lord, when he passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, striking the Egyptians, and saving our houses* †? If we ask the intention of the law of circumcision, shall we not be told, that it was *the sign of the covenant* which God made with their father Abraham, by which he bound himself *to multiply his*

* Lev. xxiii. 42. † Exod. xii. 27.

posterity, to put it in possession of the fertile land of Canaan, and to bless all nations in his seed * ? But should this evidence be found insufficient to establish the divine character of the books of Moses, and to put down the scepticism of irreligious philosophers, let the testimony avail of those sublime and holy writers, whose works follow in the order of the Old Testament, and who in every line bear such honourable evidence to his veracity.—Had Moses been the single instrument or prodigy in the hands of God to effect his designs, the proofs of his divine mission would be less powerful than they are : but when we discover a succession of similar characters in the history of this nation ; when we have a David, an Elias, a Daniel, and also the CHRIST, who preach, inculcate, and enforce the law of Moses, as a divine dispensation to the children of Abraham, can we patiently listen to the weak objections of Atheists and unbelievers ?

* Gen. xvii. 22.

Besides, has any part of the Mosaic history been proved incorrect?—Has any prediction, which the course of ages was to verify, been forgotten in the calculations of Eternal Wisdom?—Have not the events all passed before us?—Have we not seen the Jews established in the Land of Promise, and made glorious in the sight of all the kingdoms of the earth?—Have we not witnessed the introduction of the ark into the superb temple of Jerusalem, in which all nations placed their offerings before the altar of the high God?—Have we not seen how fidelity to their law was rewarded with prosperity and triumphs as foretold, whilst its violation was chastised with calamities, defeat, and captivity*? Unaccountable indeed would it therefore be,

* Moses's undisguised narrative of their prevarications,—crimes,—obstinacy,—rebellions,—punishments, &c. is not the ordinary emanation of a mind or pen actuated or directed by the natural dictates of humanity. Other philosophers, legislators, or poets, deal decidedly, either in panegyric or invective,—extremes alike opposite to truth;—neither of which the most partial critic will discover in the works of this writer.

were Providence to work miracles to verify a romance; and truly inflexible must be his obstinacy, who will regard this correspondent series of events and proofs as fortuitous.

But should there remain the grand objection, which is often imposed upon the uninformed, THAT THIS HISTORY IS AN ARTFUL FABRICATION, POSTERIOR BY MANY AGES TO THE TIME OF MOSES, then let these wise ones prove when and by whom it was fabricated.—Here, however, such difficulties rise against them on every side, that to convince us how hard they are driven for a reply, they know not when or on whom to fix it:—one ascribing it to the reign of the judges—another to a period subsequent to the Babylonish captivity. Now the supposition that it was the forgery of the judges, is as open to objection, as the idea of its being the forgery of Moses. For undoubtedly there were then living among the Jews many who, exclusive of their own

better knowledge of their history, might have opposed to it the silence of their fathers relative to the events described ;— and after that period, it is impossible to understand how any, with more authority than Moses ever claimed, could have persuaded a whole nation to believe a fabricated tale, or embrace a law so extraordinary. But when we add to these considerations the relative independence of the several tribes, the folly of the idea becomes self-evident. In answer to the last objection, that it was subsequent to the Babylonish captivity, or the composition of Esdras, I will simply state, that we know from a variety of evidence, that the Mosaic law was highly and universally respected in the reign of David, who appeared early in the Jewish history, and that the existence of copies in the possession of the Samaritans, previous to the return of the Jews from their captivity in Babylon, clearly indicates, that the law was received by the Israelites before the

separation of the ten tribes, whose hatred and jealousy towards the tribe of Juda, would never have allowed them to admit it after.

My Brethren, by thus completely establishing the divine character of the Mosaic history and law, we at once overthrow those arguments and objections, on which philosophers oppose revelation, and leave them discomfited and confuted before the world. Vain will it be for them in future learnedly to reason on the sufficiency of natural religion—unavailing sophisms! The fact, the deed, speak conclusively to the understanding. Moreover, I deny that even appearances are in favour of these naturalists, since in corroboration of the account which Moses has given us of the fall of our first parent, all things indicate a revolution in our nature*. Man

* The irregularities of the earth's surface prove the works of Moses to be genuine.—In Siberia—in America, and even here in England, the bones and teeth of the Elephant—Hippopotamus, and other animals which never existed in those

would be a mystery without that knowledge; for it is far more easy to under-
 climates, have been found—and even these were larger than those of any such animals now existing:—add to this the tradition of every nation—other histories—fabulous absurdities—incoherency—romance. If the trunk of a tree, with some part of its branches, be lodged upon the summit of Mount Stella, the chief of the Alps, four thousand feet higher than any trees or vegetables are observed to grow,—is it not a natural conclusion, that it was left there by the deluge?—Again, if the world be anterior to the Mosaic account of it, would not some such histories attest it? Would not medals—monuments—or records indicative of the fact, be somewhere found? Nor indeed can we have a stronger proof of the antiquity and authenticity of Moses's account of the creation, than the absurdities and reveries of philosophers, who have attempted to explain the origin of things upon any other principles.—What other volume but that of Moses, explains the dignity and misery of man?—what that dominion which he visibly possesses over other portions of the creation?—what those occasional revolts of brutes against man, or of matter against spirit?—what the duties of the creature to the Creator, or the relative subordinations of society?—what the regular succession of cultivation and population in the various parts of the globe?—what the difference, progress, affinity, elements and principles of language?—His birth—education—labours—mission—behaviour—trials and death, announce an extraordinary character.—In the compass of a single song—*audite cali*—he displays more exalted notions of infinite justice, wisdom, power and mercy, than are contained in the elabo-

stand that he should have fallen by sin from a state of primitive justice and felicity, than that he should have been created the compound of excellence and imperfection of which he evidently consists *.

rate compositions of Hesiod and Homer. In his writings we can study revelation—pure—genuine and unadulterated.—In the composition of subsequent writers—revelation indeed, but mingled and disguised with the reveries, absurdities and follies of natural reason.—In the nations of the world we find unparalleled orators—unparalleled poets—unparalleled statesmen—unparalleled generals—but not one such divine.—The quotations of Josephus and Eusebius from Egyptians, Phenicians, Chaldeans and Greeks, are strong collateral testimony in favour of Moses's account, particularly as these witnesses had no common interest of country, of religion, or of profession to induce them to disguise or falsify the truth. Nor is Lord Bolingbroke's observation on the difference between Pagan and Biblical authority to be omitted: "Take away Livy's miracles," says this famous philosopher, "and the train of civil events goes on just as well without them: take away Moses's, and his history becomes a heap of confusion, or more properly it is a history of nothing."

* Reason discovering by the exertion of its own powers so much excellence on earth, mingled with so many imperfections—so much dignity in man, confounded with so much misery—so much anger in God, combined with so much love—had recourse to two principles in order to explain it. But revelation informs us that the opposition of good to evil,

Indeed, if the knowledge of original sin did not throw a satisfactory light on the conduct of Providence, we should have an effect without an assignable cause, which would not be very agreeable to philosophy, and man must ever remain an inexplicable monster. The revolution therefore which has taken place in the nature of man, has directly led to those new ordinations and dispensations of a fatherly and bountiful Providence, which it shall be our business to consider as we proceed.

is neither more nor less than the revolt of the creature against the Creator.



SERMON III.

ON THE EVIDENCE OF THE PROPHETS.

*The sceptre shall not be taken from Juda,
nor a ruler from his thigh, till HE come
that is to be sent, and he shall be the ex-
pectation of nations. Gen. xlix. 10.*

COULD we but properly impress upon the minds of men, that human nature is in a state of moral, mental, and physical degradation, and that every individual of our race comes into this world marked with the crime of our first parents, and by the just sentence of God deprived of his immortal inheritance, we should be far advanced in fixing their expectations of future felicity upon a virtuous life, and a faithful correspondence with the dispensations of a merciful Providence. Indeed,

nothing contributes more to lull men into the fatal delusion of an imaginary security, than the false opinion, that they are justified from their mother's womb*, and worthy to receive from their Creator an eternal recompense. We behold many, who with the insolence of excessive pride, address him in this language: "Since I
 " am what thou hast made me, I have
 " surely a right to look to thee in com-
 " mon with my fellow creatures, for re-
 " tribution and happiness." — Impious mortal! dost thou charge the Almighty with the faults of thy own guilty parent? Who returned to thee that right which he lost for thee? No longer as thy nature was originally formed, thou hast ceased to be an object of complacency in his sight, and the arm of his justice is raised against thee. True, thou wouldst have inherited such a claim through thy first parent, had he never fallen; but now thou art become

* Job ii.

one of a proscribed race, attainted of all its honours. The crime and disgrace of thy parent have descended to his child, and will go down to thy children, as it happens in the hereditary transmissions of this life. Thy inheritance thus forfeited, thou art without right, without claim on the bounty of God, whose every act of mercy is gratuitous, and a free effort on his part. Virtue, therefore, and a faithful correspondence with those dispensations which Providence has granted, can alone furnish any kind of title to the revocation of a sentence, which the eternal justice of God must otherwise ratify and execute.

Consider then well, my Friends, in what relation you once stood towards God.—The score was all against you, even at the coming into life; and had you not been redeemed*, you would have been infallibly excluded from the kingdom of the blessed.

* Coloss. ii. 14.

It was to obviate, therefore, this state of things, and with a view to the exaltation of the whole human race, that the Almighty was pleased in his own free mercy to offer to our first parents as a remedy the religion of Christ the Messiah*; which from that period became the religion of all who were to be saved. I do not mean that its merits and divine character were so explicitly revealed to mankind before the Christian era as they are at present. Then men could only anticipate its excellence; an anticipation, however, which, combined with virtue, was acceptable to the Deity, till the course of that time was accomplished, when the plenitude of benedictions was to descend upon the world. *I, said God to Adam †, will put enmity between the serpent and the woman and his seed and her seed. She shall crush his head, and he shall lie in wait for her heel.*

Truly, my Friends, this presents us with reflections singularly grand and striking:

* Acts iv. 12.

† Gen. iii. 15.

enabled to trace back the religion of Christ for nearly six thousand years, from the Catholic and Apostolic we ascend to the Jewish Church, from that we pass to the patriarchal ages, through which we mount to our first parent, who received it directly from his Creator. As the object, then, my friends, which I have proposed this day to myself, is to lay before you the prophetic evidence of the Old Testament relative to the coming of Jesus Christ, the Lord and the Saviour of the world, I shall not stop to consider the mysterious characters of Isaac, Joseph, and Solomon*, who have been always regarded as figures of the Messiah ;—I shall not dwell on the

* Philo and Josephus considered the character of the patriarch Joseph, for instance, as figurative in all its points ;—and if we compare the facts recorded by the evangelists, with those previously inserted in the Old Testament, we shall be obliged to exclaim with Tertullian : “ Ut verbis ita et rebus “ prophetatum ! ” “ how prefigured in every act and word ! ”—and with St. Austin : “ Not only their words, but their lives “ were prophetic.” It is impossible not to acknowledge that the whole of the religion of the old law was typical either of the life of Jesus Christ or of his new dispensation.

election of Jacob, the preferment of Juda, or the exaltation of David, as indicative that the favours of God are gratuitous, and that the Gentiles were to find mercy with him, whilst Israel, through some great defect of correspondence with grace, should become a temporary outcast *;—I shall not rest on the similitude between Moses establishing the Jewish Church, and Jesus Christ building Christianity on those grand and striking predictions of the prophets†, which, deposited with the Jews

* Rom. ii. 25, 26.

† The productions of Homer, Hesiod, or any other pagan author, present their gods to our view as subordinate agents.—When they speak, it is the author who invents their sentiments, or clothes them in his own expressions;—when they foretel, it is always under some obscure and ambiguous phrase, of which the event can neither disclose the truth nor the deception; while their quarrels, and what is worse, their passions, are always in the extreme, even of us poor mortals.—Whereas, when the scriptures are consulted, man always appears in the presence of the Supreme Being in his proper character, imploring his mercy, or smarting under his justice.—Thus when the latter records his dispensations to the world, it is always in quality of an historian, reporting something said or done;—when penetrating into futurity, he speaks without ambiguity or equivocation, call-

during many ages previous to his arrival, so boldly and distinctly mark the features

ing Cyrus by his name long before his existence, and specifying the conquests of Alexander before he was king of Greece, &c. &c. — Nay, the prophecies of Daniel are so manifest, precise, and positive, that the enemies of religion have been reduced to the necessity of asserting that he wrote after the events. Which last resource is in opposition to history, to Ezekiel his cotemporary, chap. xiv. ver. 14. 20. xxviii. 3. and many other testimonies. 1 Mac. ii. 60. Joseph. Ant. lib. x. chap. 12. and lib. xi. chap. 8.

Since the extent of futurity is as much present to God as the existing moment, to his servants he reveals as much of it as is conducive to the adorable ends of his divine providence : and therefore one of these prophets, insulting the idols of the gentiles, confidently said :—*Shew the things that are to come hereafter, and we shall know that ye are gods**. The pagan poets, philosophers, and historians, indeed, seem sometimes to surpass themselves, but only where they borrow from the inspired writers.—The prayers which they address to their divinities are full of fulsome adulation, ignorance, or conceit.—Their praises are absurd, ridiculous, or borrowed from human incidents.—Sometimes they put themselves on an equality with these imaginary beings, and at other times degrade them beneath the character of their own legislators and philosophers.—Cicero says of oracles : “*Partim falsis—partim casu veris,*” Lib. ii. de Divinitat.

The pagans, it is true, had their philosophers, but opposed to each other—jealous of each others discoveries—discordant

* Isai. xli. 23.

of his character, and the circumstantial events of his life. I will not even enlarge on the general expectation of mankind for an atoning Saviour, which can alone afford an explanation of the universal practice of sacrifice among nations*, but I will proceed to shew, at the antecedent distance of

in conduct, system, and principle.—Whereas the prophets of the Jews, always found united in the same views, same principles, and same morality, bear testimony to each other, confirm the same truths, and support the same religion.—Their obscurity is no longer mysterious, than while we forget, that as the Messiah was the soul of their prophecies,—the accomplishment of the law,—the substance of the shadows,—and the reality of all the figures,—he is introduced upon every occasion : and what refers to him is often occasioned by some incident arising out of the character of those who preceded and prefigured him among the Jews.—The Septuagint Version, which, according to the best authorities, was formed about 284 years before Christ, stands a lasting monument to attest the authentic predictions of the prophets.

* There is something so unnatural and extraordinary in the practice of offering sacrifices of slain victims, that it is impossible to conceive how it could have been adopted by all nations, for the space of four thousand years, as the universal religion of man, otherwise than by referring it to some ancient revelation touching an expected bloody sacrifice of the Messiah. The first act of Noah on going out of the ark, was to *build an altar unto the Lord ; and taking of all cattle and*

three thousand years, the family from which he was to come. *In thy seed*, said God to Abraham, *all the nations of the earth shall be blessed**.

fowls that were clean, he offered holocausts upon the altar†.—

During the period just mentioned, every civil and religious act was accompanied with sacrifices. Solomon dedicated the temple of Jerusalem, by sacrificing twenty-two thousand oxen and a hundred and twenty thousand sheep; and so the king and all the children of Israel dedicated the temple of the Lord†.

—The Egyptian, the Phenician, the Greek, the Roman, the Parthian, the Persian, the Gaul, and even the secluded American, practised the same religion, differing only in the object to which it was paid, and the corruptions which the passions of men had introduced.—It is also remarkable, that none of these nations ever considered a wild animal as proper for sacrifice—nor fish nor reptile. Yet it is more natural to suppose that ferocity should have marked them out for destruction, and that the chase would have been sanctified with the denomination of a nobler species of sacrifice.—What essential difference could there be, in the immolating a fine ox, and cutting down a fine oak, if simple destruction had been the basis of religion—and the one had not an external reference to the sacrifice of the Messiah?—It is equally wonderful, that a practice so universal as that of offering victims in sacrifice should have wholly discontinued nearly at one and the same time in every nation of the world.

* Gen. xxii. 18.

† Gen. viii. 20.

† 3 Kings viii. 63.

This was the first special communication of the divine plan of a redemption, of which only a general promise had been given to our first parents, but which, however, had been carefully transmitted by the virtuous of succeeding generations. My Friends, the great advantages of prophetic declarations, were to instruct and keep alive expectation, to teach men to build their faith, not on the conclusions of human wisdom, but on the unerring word of God, which, like a flame ever burning in the midst of Israel, served to communicate light to surrounding nations. To us, however, who can bring prediction and event into one view—who can observe the intermediate links, by which an all-effecting Providence chose to connect them,—they present the most sublime motives for acknowledging the sovereign power of God, and his direct control over the transactions of this world. When we behold him opening the dark womb of distant ages, and there circumstantially describing events as they

shall come to pass, a new importance is added to them, the mind hangs on the prospect,—and we regard with an increased veneration these sacred ordinations of Eternal Wisdom. More particularly, as the prerogative of foreseeing and predicting is so confined to the Supreme Being, that it cannot be exercised by any other, unless in consequence of direct communication with him ; so as clearly to manifest in the event the work of the Most High.

The next prediction to which I will call your attention, is the memorable prophecy of Jacob—when surrounded by his family in his last moments. *The sceptre, said he, shall not be taken from Juda, nor a ruler from his thigh, till he come that is to be sent ; and he shall be the expectation of nations* *. My Friends, figure to yourselves this dying patriarch, traversing in thought a course of more than sixteen ages, at

* Gen. xlix. 9.

the end of which, in his own posterity, he discovers the completion of the divine promise to Abraham ;—I mean, the rising of the star of salvation, whose glory was afterwards to enlighten and fill the whole world. In a vision he reads the unwritten history of his children, and breaking out into the praises of Juda, under the beautiful allegories of the *lion's whelp* and the *sceptre*, proclaims the future strength and royalty of his tribe. It was from his line that HE was to come, who was to be the expectation and the Saviour of nations. The very period or epoch marked for his approach, was to be when the princes of the house of Juda should cease to govern, and a foreign ruler should wield in her the sceptre of authority.

This was to be the sign,—this was to denote that the Messiah, or the expected, was arrived, and had taken upon himself the redemption of men. There is no doubt, my Friends, a mixture of light and obscurity in all these prophecies ; but you are

to observe that the intention of God was such, in order to prove his creature, and to try the sincerity of his repentance ;—because, as pride had led him from the object of his happiness, so the wisdom of Providence determined, that he should return to it by no other ways, than those of simplicity and faith.

Examining the sacred scriptures moreover in the order of time, we observe, that it is at the distance of a thousand years before the era in question, that God begins to unfold the character of this personage ;—and in the inspired canticles of the royal psalmist, figures it out to us with such bold touches, that in contemplating them, we cannot help being struck with admiration and astonishment. For whilst the prophet is occupied in singing forth the praises of the Almighty, and in recounting his mercies to his chosen people, we often behold him suddenly turning towards another scene, which seems to move before him, and in which he discovers a representation the

most interesting and sublime. He feels as chief actor, or describes as a witness,—and without pausing to connect, rapidly hurries from one mystery to another,—now with eagle flight he mounts to the throne of God, then descends into the grave, only giving you the bold prominent and striking parts in his description, leaving the imaginary to supply the rest. He sees *one* who is to sit upon a throne throughout all generations, even 'till the moon be taken from the firmament* ; whom all the kings of the earth should adore†, and in whom all the tribes of the earth should be blessed‡. He again discovers him in the brightness of the saints, begotten before the day-star, and a priest for ever according to the order of Melchisedech§. He moreover sees him sitting at the right hand of God, and from the highest heavens beholding his vanquished enemies||. Now considers him as his son¶, and then gives him the appellation of his Lord. He again

* Ps. lxxi. 5. † Ib. ver. 11. ‡ Ib. ver. 17. § Ib. cix. 3, 4.

|| Ps. cix. 1.

¶ Ib. xlv. 8.

discovers the *same to be God, whom God had anointed, and who was seated on an eternal throne, reigning with truth, meekness, and justice*: he beholds *the Ethiopians at his feet, and the kings of Tharsis and Arabia offering him presents*. He even hears the eternal Father say, *thou art my son, this day I have begotten thee, ask of me and I will give thee the gentiles for thy inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for thy possession*. The nations strive in vain, and kings and princes devise vain things against the Lord and against his Christ*. He moreover sees him for ever blessed, because he was beautiful above the sons of men; yet he also sees him delivered up an innocent victim to his enemies. He hears him complain that *he was besieged by the malignant, who have opened their mouths against him, like a lion ravenous and roaring†*. *I am a worm, he exclaims, and no man, the reproach of men, and the out-*

* Ps. ii. 1, 2, 7, 8.

† Ib. xxi. 14, 17.

cast of the people ; all they that saw me have laughed me to scorn ; they have insultingly spoken and wagged the head. He hoped in the Lord ; they said, let him deliver him, let him save him, seeing he delighted in him*. As a neighbour and a brother so did I please, as one mourning and sorrowful so was I humbled. But they rejoiced against me and came together ; scourges were gathered together upon me, and I knew not why†. They have dug my hands and feet, they have numbered all my bones ; and they have looked upon me—and stared upon me : they gave me gaul for my food, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink. They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture they cast lots‡. My tongue hath cleaved to my jaws, and they have brought me down into the dust of death§. But he afterwards sees him entering triumphantly into heaven, and all the nations of the earth converted to the Lord. He sees the rich,

* Ps. xxi. 7, 8, 9.

† Ib. xxxiv. 17, 14, 15.

‡ Ib. xxi. 17, 18, 19.

§ Ib. ver. 16.

the poor, and the powerful offering him the homage of eternal praise and adoration.

The other prophets were favoured with not less just representations of the Messiah. To Isaiah is revealed *the sign which the Lord himself should give: Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a son**. He sees in him *the shoot which was to spring from Jesse†, the stock of David, whom the Gentiles should invoke. He was to be called the child of wonder; and he also styles him God. He sees him struck like a tender plant with the blast, and deprived of all comeliness. Who hath believed our report, he says,‡ when we declare, that we have seen him despised and the most abject of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with infirmity. And his look was as it were hidden and despised, whereupon we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our infirmities and carried our sorrows; we have thought him as it were a leper, and as one struck by God and*

* Isaiah vii. 14.

† Ib. xi. 1.

‡ Ib. liii. , &c.

afflicted. But he was wounded for our iniquities, he was bruised for our sins,—and by his bruises we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray, every one hath turned aside into his own way ; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was offered because it was his own will, and he opened not his mouth ; he shall be led as a sheep to the slaughter, and shall be dumb as a lamb before the shearer, and he shall not open his mouth. Therefore, said the Lord, will I distribute to him very many, and he shall divide the spoils of the strong, because he hath delivered his soul unto death, and was reputed with the wicked ; and he hath borne the sins of many, and hath prayed for the transgressors. In fine, the prophet sees his sepulchre all glorious, and he exclaims, truly thou art a hidden God, the God of Israel, the Saviour.†*

If we pay attention to the communications which were made to these prophets,

* Isaiah xi. 10.

† Ib. xlv. 15.

we shall observe that they almost wholly relate to three particular objects; The humiliations and sufferings of the Messiah—the criminal conduct and the reprobation of the Jews—and the glorious and perpetual establishment of the church of Christ among the Gentiles. This is their universal theme, which they seldom or never abandon; and tho' each seems to contemplate the object presented in some new light or attendant circumstance, the whole is easily formed into one connected account. Thus, if Jacob foretold, *that the Messiah should come in the line of Juda**,—if to Isaias it was revealed that *a virgin should conceive and bring forth a son†*,—it was the prophet Micheas who was privileged to foretel the place of his birth: *And thou Bethlehem art a little one among the thousands of Juda—out of thee shall HE come forth, who is to be the ruler in Israel: and his going forth is from the beginning, from the days of eternity‡.*

* Gen. xlix. 10.

† Isa. vii. 14.

‡ Mich. v. 2.

Moreover if David foresaw the arrival of *the princes of Arabia with presents**,—it was Isaias who foretold that they should be accompanied *by a great light†*, which should be visible to all Jerusalem ;—whilst another prophet marks his habitation in the land of Egypt : *Out of Egypt have I called my Son‡*. And if the psalmist knew that he was to be a priest of the Most High, it was Malachy, who declared, that his approach should be announced by a precursor : *Behold, said the Lord of Hosts to the prophet, I send my angel, (my messenger), and he shall prepare the way before my face ; and presently the Lord whom you seek, and the angel of the testament, whom you desire, shall come to his temple§*. The prophet Aggeus, moreover predicts to Zorobabel, the glory which on this account should fill the temple of Jerusalem, ere yet the walls had risen from their foundations : *And the desired of all*

* Ps. lxxi. 10.

† Isaiah lx 1.

‡ Osee xi. 2.

§ Malachy iii. ,

*nations shall come, and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of Hosts, great shall be the glory of this last house more than that of the first**. Again if Isaias conceived him springing as a flower from the root of Jesse†, it was the prophet Zacharias, who prophetically proclaimed his triumphant entry into the city of David; *Rejoice, he says‡, greatly, oh daughters of Sion; shout for joy, oh! daughter of Jerusalem; Behold thy king will come to thee, the just and saviour; he is poor and riding upon an ass*. If David beheld him rejected and an alien amongst his brethren§,—it was the prophet Zacharias who saw him sold to his enemies for thirty pieces of silver, and the money given to the potter¶. And if the psalmist foresaw that he would be scourged, and his hands and feet dug, it was Moses who foretold that not a bone should be broken¶. If Isaias discovers him glorious in his tomb, Zacharias sees the shepherd struck

* Aggeus ii. 8, 10.

† Isaias xi. 1.

‡ Zach. xi. 9.

§ Ps. lxxviii. 11.

¶ Zach. xi. 13.

¶ Exod. xii. 46.

and the sheep scattered ; he hears some ask him, what are these wounds in the midst of thy hands ? and he answers, with these I was wounded in the house of them that loved me ; the inhabitants of Jerusalem shall look upon him whom they have pierced ; and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for an only son, and they shall grieve over him, as the manner is to grieve for the death of the first-born†.*

It is in this manner, my Brethren, that the prophets were sent forward by God, as precursors to unfold to the people of Israel every feature of the life and character of their promised Messiah. We have seen them ages before his arrival, describing his family,—the place of his birth,—his endowments of grace, and his willingness to suffer for our iniquities :—we have seen them enumerating his wounds, and pointing to his hands, his feet, and his side :—in fine, we have heard them number him amongst the

* Zach xiii. 6, 7.

† Ib. xii. 10.

dead. From his original conception, to the glory, which shone from his tomb, there is no one circumstance relative to this desired of all nations, which they did not accurately and emphatically notice to that obdurate people, by whom he was to be rejected and put to death. Nor were the divine communications to the Jews confined alone to those particulars. The vision of the prophet Daniel was to them still more important, since it brought the accomplishment of all the other predictions to a precise point of time, and gave the world an opportunity of fully attending to the course of events by which they were to be verified.

Whilst the prophet was praying for the deliverance of his brethren from their captivity in Babylon, his mind is suddenly directed to sublimer mysteries, and the angel Gabriel thus addresses him by the command of God. *Oh Daniel, I am now come forth to teach thee, and that thou*

*mightest understand. * Seventy weeks* (that is four hundred and ninety years, for the Jews counted weeks of years as well as days) *seventy weeks are shortened upon thy people and upon thy holy city, that transgression may be finished and sin may have an end, and iniquity may be abolished; and everlasting justice may be brought; and vision and prophecy may be fulfilled; and the saint of saints may be anointed. Know thou, therefore, and take notice, that from the going forth of the word to build up Jerusalem again, unto Christ the Prince, there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; and the street shall be built up again, and the walls in troublesome times. And after sixty-two weeks Christ shall be slain, and the people that shall deny him shall not be his; and a people with their leader that shall come, shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be waste; and after the end of the war the appointed*

* Dan. ix. 22.

desolation. And he shall confirm the covenant with many in one week ; and in the half of the week the victim and the sacrifice shall fail. And there shall be in the temple the abomination of desolation ; and the desolation shall continue even to the consummation and to the end.

The next and last prophecy I will disclose to you, my Friends, shall be that of Malachy. Thro' the medium of this prophet, God makes a declaration to the priests of the Jewish synagogue, which can only refer to the period mentioned by Daniel, when the Christ should be slain, and when the Gentiles should be aggregated to the Church of God. The priesthood and sacrifices of the Jews were pleasing to God as long as they were figures of the Messiah, whom he was to send ; but afterwards would be useless, and without meaning, or rather insults in those who denied the reality. Therefore the prophet tells them * ; *I have no pleasure in you, saith the*

* Malachy i. 10, 11.

Lord of Hosts, and I will not receive a gift of your hand; for from the rising of the sun, even to the going down, my name is great among the Gentiles, and in every place there is sacrifice and there is offered to my name a clean offering, for my name is great among the Gentiles, saith the Lord of Hosts.

Malachias is the last of the prophets in the order of time; and with him, at the distance of about four hundred years before Christ, closes that long train of inspired characters, who for nearly three thousand years successively enlightened Israel. From that period reigns an unbroken silence.—No prophet rises in Juda to address the chosen people of God.—An important moment is approaching—all is hushed into a mysterious calm—a calm which even for an interval pervades the universe.—At length the angel mentioned by the prophet, the Baptist coming forth, as the precursor of Christ, proclaims his arrival to the Jews, when he immediately appears, announc-

ing himself the Son of God, the Messiah, and accomplishes in his own person all the predictions of the prophets. He is born amongst that people a king, he lives amongst them a prophet, and he dies amongst them a victim, a Saviour, and a God. *Agonizing, he exclaims with a loud voice, All is consummated, and gives up the ghost**. Like Sampson, he again bursts the bonds of death, issues forth a God from his tomb, and commands twelve poor friendless and dejected men to go and establish the Christian religion throughout the world. Go, he says, persecutions shall be your bread, prisons your palaces, racks your thrones, and martyrdoms your crowns. Scarcely are the commands received, than the whole world resounds with the name of Jesus Christ who was crucified; their rapidity is like to the rapidity of the torrent, and their conquests like to the conquests of a mighty conque-

* John xix. 30.

ror. Yet performing all by the sword of the word of God, they announce to every nation the accomplishment of the events which had been foretold ; carry with them these same prophecies as evidence ; and what is most remarkable, find in every part of the world unexceptionable witnesses in the children of Israel, who are the faithful guardians of these testimonies, and who by approving this evidence are forced to give judgment against themselves in favour of Christianity.

For you are to observe, that the prophecies to which I allude, and which appear so strong in proof, form a part of the Jewish Bible, and have ever been held as a sacred deposit by that people.—Should any one question their authority, he would immediately direct against himself their keenest and united indignation. We, therefore, who are a part of this ministry, continue to announce the accomplishment of these prophecies, and to urge you to accept those advantages which your redemp-

tion by Jesus Christ holds forth. He has paid the ransom of your iniquities, he has cancelled the sin of Adam; but your correspondence with his graces alone can put you in possession of the benefit which is to result from hence, and give you a title to the eternal kingdom of God. By his death he has burst those gates which were shut against you, but religion can lead you in. Having as man entered into the bright glory of his Father* by humility, mortification, and holiness of life, it is only those who are willing to follow him in the exercise of the same virtues, who shall be privileged to share his triumphs, which I trust one day will be your happy lot.

* 1 John ii. 6.



SERMON IV.

ON THE EVIDENCE WHICH EVENTS OFFER FOR CHRISTIANITY

Behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, that shall be to all the people, for a saviour is born to you, who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David. Luke ii. 10, 11.

THIS question is often and very naturally put—why are infidel philosophers, in their anxiety to set aside the proofs of revelation, so earnest to persuade the world, that there is nothing to look for beyond the grave? Verily, my Friends, such a mode of proceeding should greatly excite our astonishment, since it is irreconcilable with any one good quality and principle of our nature. In direct opposition to sound philosophy, it is also contradictory

to that philanthropy by which they profess to be specially actuated. If Christianity tended to any thing but real happiness in this world,—if its end and object were any other than present peace and felicity hereafter, I think their apology might then be found. But since it is a system of religion, which embraces every virtue to the exclusion of every vice,—since it essentially leads to happiness, exalts the human character, and surpasses in excellence every other that can be devised, I am at a loss to name any honest motive that can possibly influence these persons.

For even in the supposition that it is a delusion, and holds forth a hope of future glory that will never be realized, where is the good of volunteering to blast our expectations, and by tearing this only comfort from every poor and afflicted individual, leave him in his wretchedness, hopeless and forlorn? Is it not to torture him in his finest feelings, and to deprive him of that only stay which can render life tole-

nable? How could we exercise a more refined cruelty towards a distressed and friendless mother, who looked forward to the termination of her woes in the happy return of a darling son from a distant clime, than to tell her, your son is buried in the waves? Oh it would be an unnecessary, a heart breaking officiousness! As it is impossible then to find a good, an honest, and a philosophical motive for the zeal and eagerness which these adversaries of revelation display,—we must seek for one of another description, and I believe we shall discover it here.

When once a man is rashly engaged in a cause in which he stakes his all, his reason soon abandons him, and he becomes desperate. The professed infidel, or the deistical philosopher, is in this predicament—for, as I have observed, having once volunteered to be the enemy of revealed religion, he soon perceives that he is risking every thing on the event, and that if

Christianity be any thing but a delusion, he is for ever undone.—Therefore since no hope of mercy can be reserved for him, self-interest inflamed by all the passions of human nature at once begins to work.—His mind is seized with phrensy, and he says within himself, I should be the happiest man in the world, could I only prove that Christianity is a dream. For then, says Bolingbroke, “the burning lake will disappear;” and another of the same class, observes in a letter to his friend, “that it would save a soul from “the dismal apprehensions of eternal “damnation, and relieve a person from “labouring under that uneasiness of “mind, which often he is under when “pleasure and christianity come in competition.”* Here we touch the secret.

* D'Alembert, writing to his friend Voltaire, says, “I “consider those very happy who are at Geneva, particularly “since they are not obliged to say that the ministers believe “the divinity of Jesus Christ and eternal punishments.”—Letter 45.

To be sure, if the imagination could possess the magical property of annihilating—if suppositions could alter the real state of things, it would perhaps be proper that we should all betake ourselves to conjecture; but since we have good reason to doubt, that fancy has any such efficacy, I am rather for substituting a manly enquiry, and must pronounce an opposite proceeding the extreme of folly.

From this concise exposition of the conduct of infidel philosophers, we may learn why they take so much pains to oppose the religion of Jesus.—Hence we may discover why they are so eager to form proselytes, and spread their poisonous infection on every side.—Hence explain why they never scruple about the means they employ.—To detect them in falsehood, calumny, and imposition, serves but to furnish them with an occasion for insultingly laughing at their own audacity and the stupidity of other men. Nothing comes amiss to them,

if they can only bend it into an argument against religion. My Friends, to speak in stronger language, they are the most execrable characters of the human race. Leagued against all social happiness, by aiming at the destruction of virtue, they may be compared to pestilential sinks, dangerous to all who approach, and objects that should be universally cast from society. — The government that tolerates them deserves to perish, and the country that affords them an asylum will deservedly become the stage, on which shall be enacted those scenes of desolation and horror, which have lately astonished Europe, and which are but the result of previous plans, laid and executed by the adepts in deistical philosophy*. Was it

* Modern infidels, instead of shewing by their own conduct that their morality is purer than that of the gospel, always refer us for proofs and examples to heroes of former ages—and what have they been? Weak—cowardly—insidious—dangerous to states—enemies to kings—vicious with their pretensions to virtue—believing in a devil, though denying a God — egotists—suicides. See in Feller's Dict.

not a Voltaire and a d'Alembert, who boasted, that in a few years they would completely undo all that had been effected by the twelve wretches who first preached Christianity, meaning the twelve apostles*.

Hist. the articles Solon—Nero—Plato—Stilpo—Vespasian—Zeno—Faustus—Cicero—Cato—Seneca—Lucien ;—and for more modern times, Jouvenny — Santerel — Montagne — Rousseau—Shaftesbury—Hume—Voltaire—Marsais—Montesquieu.——The retort of an Athenian prostitute accused of corrupting youth, is not amiss :—“ What does it signify, “ Stilpo,” said she, “ whether *I* do it, or *you* ?” Among the ancient philosophers, there is not an exception to be found to this sentiment of St. Austin : “ They practised what “ they reprov'd, and worshipp'd what they condemn'd.” Epictetus is without comparison the most perfect of the pagan egotists—and why ? because he lived thirty-four years after Christ.—The substance of pagan morality is, to unite our hopes and fears within ourselves ;—that of Christianity, to refer every thing to the glory of God and the advantage of our neighbour—i. e. momentary subordination and resignation here, for eternal glory and independance hereafter.

* Letter 66 to d'Alembert, ann. 1760.—“ Should not these admissions deter men from reading their works ? Would they expose themselves on a platform, where they knew a mine was laid for their destruction ? The history of Voltaire's death, as published by his physician, forms the most complete refutation possible of his antichristian writings.——The same is also to be said of the antichristian

Did not the former declare that he envied the men who should live to reap the harvest which his associates had prepared, and see philosophy triumphing on the ruins of religion?

But if a further testimony be necessary, I will produce the extraordinary production of the great Leibnitz, who clearly foresaw these events a century before they arrived. Speaking of the characters this philosophy was to form, he says: "That
 " should they be inclined to be ambitious,
 " and resolute, they would be capable of
 " setting fire to the four quarters of the
 " world; and there have been some, he
 " says, of this temper, whom death hath
 " removed. I even observe," he continues,
 " that sentiments which are tainted with
 " these principles are working by little

writings of the infidel Mr. Thomas Paine: see the striking account of his death, also published by his physician in America. He, who through life had laboured to disseminate amongst his British countrymen the horrid principles of his master, Voltaire, died exclaiming: "Lord Jesus, have mercy on me."

“ and little on men in high life, who have
 “ the direction of others, and by whom
 “ affairs are governed ; and finding their
 “ way into fashionable books, dispose all
 “ for that general revolution with which
 “ Europe is threatened.” And mark, my
 Friends, the clear discernment of this distinguished philosopher. “ It may happen,” he proceeds, “ that those persons will experience in themselves the evils which they thought were reserved for others. If a remedy be applied in time to this epidemic phrensy, of which the bad effects begin to appear, these consequences may be prevented ; but should they go on increasing, Providence will punish the world with that revolution which it must produce. For although it may always happen, that at the end of the account things may turn to the general advantage, nevertheless this ought not and cannot come to pass, without the chastisement of those who have contributed to it by their crimes*.”

* Essay on the Human Understanding, page 429.

Such is the testimony of a man who died in 1716. Oh ! my friends, if you were but sensible of the horrid tendency of the writings and conversations of that band of deists to whom I allude, you would sooner receive the tiger and the serpent into the sanctuaries of your families, than allow them to be contaminated by the breath of these demons incarnate. They will there deposit their poison, which working secretly, will perhaps one day lead to the perpetration of a crime that shall break a husband's or a parent's heart. Whence comes it that adultery, seduction, and general profligacy are now so common, but on account of the writings of such characters as Hume, Bolingbroke and Voltaire ? Whence comes it that suicides are so frequent, but because authors of this description are generally read and admired ? Yes, parent, it was they who first instigated, they who pushed thy child to commit the horrid act, to which thou didst concur by thus exposing thy offspring. But you

ask, may we not examine their works ?
 No, rather expel them, commit them to
 the flames. Would you examine a putrid
 carcase, or one diseased with the plague* ?
 Let the judgment suffice which Rousseau
 himself has passed on his brother philoso-
 phers, and let it come in aid of all I have
 said on this subject† : “ I have consulted
 “ our philosophers, he says, I have perused
 “ their books, I have examined their se-
 “ veral opinions, I have found them all
 “ proud, positive, and dogmatizing, even
 “ in their pretended scepticism, knowing
 “ every thing, proving nothing, and ridi-
 “ culing one another ; and this is the only
 “ point in which they concur and in which
 “ they are right. Daring when they at-
 “ tack, they defend themselves without
 “ vigour. If you consider their argu-
 “ ments, they have none but for destruc-
 “ tion ; if you count their number, each
 “ one is reduced to himself ; they never

* Acts xix. 20.

† Emile iii. 25.

“unite but to dispute; to listen to them
 “was not the way for me to relieve myself
 “from my doubts. I conceived that the
 “insufficiency of the human understand-
 “ing was the first cause of this prodigious
 “diversity of sentiment, and that pride
 “was the second.—If our philosophers
 “were able to discover truth, which of
 “them would interest himself about it?
 “Each of them knows that his system is
 “not better established than the others,
 “but he supports it, because it is his;
 “there is not one amongst them, who com-
 “ing to distinguish truth from falsehood,
 “would not prefer his own error to the
 “truth that is discovered by another.
 “Where is the philosopher who for his own
 “glory would not willingly deceive the
 “whole human race? Where is he, who in
 “the secret of his heart, proposes any other
 “object than his own distinction; provided
 “he can but raise himself above the com-
 “monality, provided he can eclipse his
 “competitors, he has reached the summit

“ of his ambition. The great thing for
 “ him is to think differently from other
 “ people. Among believers he is an
 “ atheist, among atheists a believer.—
 “ Shun then, he says, those, who under
 “ pretence of explaining nature, sow in
 “ the hearts of men the most dispiriting
 “ doctrines, whose scepticism is far more
 “ affirmative and dogmatical than the de-
 “ cided tone of their adversaries. Under
 “ pretence of being themselves the only
 “ people enlightened, they imperiously
 “ subject us to their magisterial decisions,
 “ and would fain palm upon us for the true
 “ causes of things, the unintelligible sys-
 “ tems they have built in their own heads.
 “ Whilst they overturn, destroy, and
 “ trample under foot, all that mankind
 “ reveres, snatch from the afflicted, the
 “ only comfort left them in their misery,
 “ from the rich and great the only curb
 “ that can restrain their passions ; tear up
 “ from the heart all remorse of vice, all
 “ hopes of virtue, and still boast them-

“selves the benefactors of mankind.
 “Truth, they say, is never hurtful to man,
 “—I believe that as well as they; and the
 “same in my opinion, is a proof, that
 “what they teach is not the truth.”*

My Friends, indignation has carried me further than I intended in my animadversions on these philosophers, whom I shall now leave, that as I have already viewed Christianity by the light of the prophets, we may at present consider it by the evidence of events. The first circumstances I shall notice, in attestation of the divine character of the crucified Jesus, are the testimony which the Roman soldiers bore to his resurrection,—and the hardened conduct of the chief priests, on that occasion: *And the priests being assembled together with the ancients, taking counsel, gave a*

* This description of our modern philosophers from Rousseau, corresponds in every article to Lucien's picture of the ancient, and proves to a tittle, that pretensions to morality and wisdom have been and will continue the same thro' the lapse of time. Vid. Article Lucien in Feller's Dict. Hist.

great sum of money to the soldiers; saying, say you, that his disciples came by night and stole him away when we were asleep.*

“ Truly,” exclaims St. Austin, “ these
 “ have outwitted themselves ; what a
 “ mistake have you not committed, who
 “ wished to be so sly ! could you be so
 “ far estranged from common honesty,
 “ and familiar with deceit, as to tell them,
 “ say that his disciples came by night and
 “ stole him away, when we were asleep ?
 “ What ! produce sleeping witnesses ?
 “ Truly ye sleep who can thus outwit
 “ yourselves.”

The next event to which I will call your attention, is the immediate preaching of the gospel throughout the world. Scarcely had Jesus Christ ascended to the throne of his Eternal Father, than twelve poor men, no otherwise distinguished than as followers of a crucified leader, come forth in the midst of the great city of Jerusalem, and

* Matt. xxviii. 12, 13.

laying aside every consideration which usually influences human nature, proclaim aloud to the Jews as the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, whom they had crucified. *The God of our fathers hath raised up Jesus whom you put to death, hanging him upon a tree. Him hath God exalted with his right-hand to be Prince and Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sins. And we are witnesses of all these things**. By thus acting in defiance of the Jewish priests and magistrates, and under the very eyes of Pilate the Roman governor, who was hereby impeached for his unjust sentence, they were exposing themselves to the severity of the law, and without friends and protectors, could have no reason to expect mercy from those who had so far carried their enmity and cruelty to Jesus Christ himself†. Indeed, scourges, menaces, and imprisonment, are what they are immediately to suffer ; yet they per-

* Acts v. 30.

† See Parsons's Christian Directory.

sist, confounding their enemies by their miracles, astonishing all Jerusalem by their conduct, and within a few days, notwithstanding these discouraging circumstances, induce many thousands to confess the Messiah they had crucified *. Even Saul, the most furious of their enemies, who was lately *breathing out threatenings and slaughter against them* †, became converted to their faith, *and immediately preached Jesus in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God* ‡. Now, my Brethren, all this is inexplicable by any principle that we are acquainted with in human nature, and clearly indicates that they were urged by the impulse of a supernatural motive.—Men who abandon and deny their Master when alive, and die for him after his death, must have been convinced of his resurrection;—while the confession of those who acknowledged him to be the Christ and the Son of God, from these same circumstances, offer

* Acts ii.

† Ibid. ix. 1.

‡ Ibid. ver. 20.

the most unexceptionable and powerful testimony of truth ever given by men in this world.

But what is most striking in the conduct of the apostles, is, that in spite of those national prejudices, which the Jews bore against every other nation of the world on account of their idolatries, these children of Israel, forgetting their jealousies, immediately prepare to accomplish the promises which had been made to Abraham, *that in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed**—and going forth from Judea, announce to the whole world redemption through Jesus Christ. Breaking through every consideration which attaches man to his country, his family, and his home, they make a sacrifice of all, and devote themselves to a function the most sublime, and till then the most extraordinary, that had ever been attempted.—You are aware of the prejudices which are

* Gen. xxii. 18.

usually entertained against whatever is foreign ;—with them they had constantly to contend, whilst the corrupt passions of human nature, against which the religion they preached was directly pointed, presented an obstacle far more difficult to overcome. Yet be astonished and confounded, ye infidels, they prevailed—in spite of every species of opposition, they established Christianity throughout the world, and gave her a dominion which she has uninterruptedly retained. Idolatry has shrunk before her ; and though she has not exterminated vice, because she could not annihilate the liberty of men, yet she has exalted virtue, and made her honourable even to the wicked. Truly sound then, was the advice which Gamaliel the Pharisee gave to the Jewish priests respecting the apostles : *Ye men of Israel, said he*, take heed to yourselves, what you intend to do as touching these men. For before these days many have appeared having followers,*

* Acts v. 35.

but after a time they dispersed, and all was brought to nothing. . . . And now, therefore, I say to you, refrain from these men, and let them alone : for if this council or this work be of men, it will come to nought. But if it be of God, you cannot overthrow it.

When, therefore, my Brethren, we consider the preaching of the gospel and its effects ;—when we behold the several nations of the earth erecting among them the standard of the crucified Jesus, and professing the doctrine of his law ;—when we observe that long train of priests and bishops, who have been successively ministering and instructing in every nation of the world ;—when we reflect on the violent persecutions it has withstood, we are forced to admit that these events proclaim the Christian religion to be the work of God, and the divine blessing promised to all nations in a Messiah. Here, perhaps, an objection might be started, drawn from the long standing religions of the Maho-

metans and Hindoos of India *. The objection, however, is easily overthrown ;

* The following remarks of Voltaire deserve some little attention. " In regard to the Indians, let us not forget that they hold a terrestrial paradise, and that the human race, for abusing the goodness of God, were driven out of this paradise.—The fall of degenerate man is the foundation of the theology of almost all the nations of antiquity . . . and what is still more singular, is, that the Vedam of the ancient Brachmans teaches that the first man was Adimo, and the first woman Pocriti. Adimo signified Lord—and Pocriti meant LIFE, as Heva among the Phenicians and the Hebrews, also signified Life, or SERPENT.—This conformity merits great attention." (*Essai sur les Mœurs*, Disc. Prol.)—The different sects and divisions which have been formed in the very bosom of Christianity, rather strengthen than weaken the faith of a philosophic mind ; since they prove the divine foundation on which it must have been originally established.—Could human endeavours prevail, it must have fallen long since.—Schisms and divisions in the Christian Church do not arise from the nature of the doctrine of Christ, but from the depraved minds of men, who refuse to listen to his precepts and instructions, which breathe nothing but peace and charity. Yet, where any diversity of opinions be held and professed with an humble spirit, without detriment to peace and brotherly love, and without any separation of the Church into parts, instead of being repugnant to peace and charity, they help more fully and perfectly to discover truth.—Heresies are signs of truth, as counterfeits are of realities.—Mahomet admits that Moses was a prophet, and that Jesus was the Mes-

for not only are those religions national, and very confined when viewed comparatively with the great Christian Church, but are in themselves so very different, that it would be an insult to reason and argument, to contrast them. The Christian religion has triumphed over the passions of human nature, and it is in this that she appears so great. The other owes every thing to the passions, and is likely to subsist as long as men are found depraved enough to place felicity in their indulgence. Here also may be found the reason why the Jews still refuse to acknowledge Jesus Christ for the Messiah, tho' they have been in vain expecting another from that time, a period of eighteen hundred years.—I do not mean to say, that the Jew is equally governed by his passions, as the Mahometan ; but I will say, siah ; after which acknowledgment this argument is invincible : if Christianity be true, Mahomet is an impostor *; if Christianity be false, he is not less one because he makes use of it to prove his own mission. Vide Alcoran.

* Gal. i. 2.

without fear of contradiction, that the gospel teaches a morality far above what he has been accustomed to consider the perfection of religion. Judaism may be considered as material Christianity, and Christianity defined, spiritualized Judaism. *For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ**.

The next circumstance I shall notice, as evidence of Christianity, is the conduct of her martyrs †. It must be allowed by all who have read the history of their triumphs, that the constancy they displayed was not the mad folly of enthusiasts.—They made not religion contemptible, whilst they suffered on its account, nor braved the terrors of a violent death with a fanatical obstinacy, glorying in themselves, and without a motive—but patiently and humbly depending for strength on God, they

* John i. 17.

† The martyrs were educated in prejudices opposite to—and numbers of them had even persecuted the religion for which they finally shed their blood.

cheerfully went to execution, and bore their torments with that cool fortitude which has never been exhibited in any other cause. Virgins, forgetting the timidity of their sex, have in the presence of racks, swords, and fire, confessed the divinity of that Jesus who suffered for the world.—Rejecting every worldly temptation, and displaying the most heroic virtues, they laid down their lives for the faith of Jesus Christ—nobly triumphing over nature and the studied cruelty of their executioners. To count the number of these illustrious heroines, to tell the millions in every rank and class, who in every country have generously sealed the testimony of Christianity in their blood, would be impossible. — Nor can the constancy and readiness with which they suffered—the assurance they manifested in their expectation of a crown of glory, and the conversions which ensued, be viewed any otherwise, than as so many undeniable attestations of the divine character of the

Christian Religion. For though it be true, that fanatics will often assume the resolution of martyrs, and mistake obstinacy for constancy, thus exhibiting to the world a fault instead of a virtue, yet when we examine the ranks of our Christian heroes, so many are found distinguished for every accomplishment of mind and heart, that it is impossible to refuse them the glory of having persisted to the end, from the noblest motives.

The next point in evidence that I will adduce, shall be, the homage that has been done to Christianity by the great, the powerful, and the learned. Whatever may be the influence of persuasion and example, on the inferior classes of men, it will be admitted, that those who are exalted to an independent station, and possess an understanding enriched with knowledge, are secure from the reach of such vulgar prejudices, and qualified to pass an honourable and a rational decision. It is to these, then, that I appeal, who innumerable in

every age and civilized nation, have borne such distinguished testimony, in favour of Christianity.—Kings and warriors, philosophers and politicians, eminent in their several stations, have gloried more in the character of a follower of Christ, than in the honours derived from the situations which they filled ; and long since would thousands have been forgotten, had not the fame of their christian virtues descended to posterity. Even if we take a view of the christian world in this licentious age, how many shall we not discover whose virtues, rank, and learning, reflect a lustre on the religion they profess. True it is, on which ever side we cast our eyes, the number of those who live in open violation of its principles is very great ;—nor would the gospel be true were it otherwise. Yet amid the general depravity, there are some who stem the torrent of bad example, and through the shades of corruption and vice, beam a light of sanctity.—Several equally conspicuous for the practice of the

gospel, as for their worldly endowments, give glory to the religion of Jesus Christ, and demonstrate the truth of his words,—*Many are called, but few are chosen**.

Hitherto I have not adverted to the supernatural evidence of signs and miracles, which have been constantly employed as divine attestations of Christianity, and to which an historical reference may be made in every age of the church. Time will not allow me here to insist upon any in particular, but they seem invariably to be the honours attendant on heroical virtue and great apostolical labours. They form a continuation of the miracles of Moses, of the prophets, and of Jesus Christ, and are what our divine Saviour himself, has declared should be the mark of the religion which he revealed.—Besides, in further proof, that they are not the deeds of imposition and fraud, we may observe, that they are never attributed

* Matt. xxii. 14.

to any, but those who have been examples of profound humility and great sanctity of manners. I could instance a Xaverius, in the Indies ; and in Europe I could instance numbers. The credulity of men, and their accounts of pretended miracles, often urged in argument against the reality of any miracle whatever, rather tend to establish their existence, by showing them to be conformable to the general opinion of mankind, and only prove, that in some instances men have too readily lent their assent to what was not sufficiently authenticated. For if any one will take the pains to examine the evidence on which many of them are credited, he will find as much reason for admitting them, as any other event in history, or anecdote of the day.

The last circumstances to which I shall direct your attention, as evidence of the arrival of the Messiah*, in the person of

* The sentence of the prophet Osee, *The children of Israel shall sit without a king, without a prince, without a sacri-*

Christ, are the immediate dissolution of the Jewish church, and the dispersion of that people through all the nations of the earth. Scarcely had that wicked people uttered their imprecation, *let his blood be upon us and upon our children**, than the power of Rome is called to be the signal instrument of divine vengeance, and a Roman army lays waste their country with fire and sword.—Jerusalem is besieged and sacked, and its splendid temple razed to the ground; and to fulfil the prophecy†, *not a stone is left upon a stone to*

fice, and without an altar‡, receives a striking confirmation from the hand of God, in testimony of Christianity, from the following circumstances:—When this astonishing people had their kings, their prophets, and their temple, they were always attempting to mix with other nations, and to adopt their religion; since their dispersion, they obstinately persevere in adhering to their own—continually oppressed, but not yet annihilated, they wander like Cain, smeared with the blood of innocence,—but marked with the finger of the Omnipotent; *that whosoever found him should not kill him*§.

* Matt. xxvii. 25.

† This prophecy was completed by the Emperor Julian. See Butler's Life of St. Cyril, March 18th.

‡ Osee iii. 4.

§ Gen. iv. 15.

*be removed.** Far more complete is the last desolation of Sion, than it was in the captivity of Babylon.—Then her race of kings, and her priesthood were preserved to her, which are now extinct.—Then her tribes were distinguished which are now confounded.—When transported into one kingdom, her people were respected by their enemies and governed by their own law; whereas for eighteen hundred years, are they scattered like dust through all the nations of the universe, without protection, without law, the scorn, the reproach, and the outcast of mankind. And why all this, ye sons of Juda? no prophet of consolation rises amongst you—no victim is slain,—ye seem a people whom heaven has abandoned. The God of your fathers is adored by the Gentiles,—the priesthood of Aaron has given place to the priesthood of Melchisedech,—incense smokes upon our altars to the

* Matt. xxiv. 2.

Eternal, and a new victim is sacrificed !!! My Brethren, this extraordinary change in the circumstances of the Jews and Gentiles, since the death of Christ, forms a striking and standing miracle, for which no human reason can account, and is by itself testimony sufficient to convince the world that Jesus Christ was the eternal Son of God.

Therefore satisfied with this chain of facts, which joined with the evidence of the prophets forms a body of testimony for Christianity, that must infallibly secure every upright and virtuous mind against all doubt and anxiety, let us ascend to God, himself, their divine author, as to the ultimate motive of credibility: and thus confidently reposing in his promises and designs, patiently expect the last scene, which is to unfold the great views of his providence, and in which we shall receive that crown of glory which shall never fail. Amen.

SERMON V.

ON THE DIVINITY OF JESUS CHRIST.

Jesus Christ being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but debased himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and in fashion found as a man. He humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Phil. ii. 6, 7, 8.

*NOTHING is more calculated to strike with astonishment an observing and phi-

• I should wish to speak on the Trinity and divine incarnation of Jesus Christ; but how can I explain what I do not comprehend?—They are mysteries, and as long as they remain such, must be incomprehensible.—Yet I can assent to them as incomprehensible truths—as I assent to many others in nature. I believe, for instance, that matter was created—but how, I know not.—I believe that the corn grows from the seed—but how, I cannot tell. By the same principle, I can believe that there are three distinct Divine Persons, co-existent from all eternity;—that the first Person, styled in the sacred scriptures the Father, from all eternity contemplating his own perfections, from all eternity begot of himself the second Person called the Son, who is in essence his own living image and self-same substance;—that from these two first Persons proceeded the third Person, or Holy Ghost, as

losophic mind, than the difference of impression which the evidence of religion

the eternal effect of divine love; who being the self-same substance, and the eternal object of their divine complacency, is to them an eternal and indissoluble bond;—and that these three Divine Persons so existing in a unity of nature and essence, are that Supreme Being we call God.—I can moreover believe that the second Person of this sacred Trinity, begotten by an eternal generation, assumed in time the nature of man, without detriment to his divinity;—yet the moment I attempt to comprehend and unfold the mysteries which are here involved, I advance beyond my depth, and am lost in infinity.—The comparison used by a poor Indian to justify his belief in the Trinity, when accosted by an antichristian philosopher, is worthy the notice of many others who pretend to wisdom.—The philosopher asked him how he could believe that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, are each God, and yet admit but one God. Why, replied the Indian, what is rain? Water, said the other.—And what is snow? Water.—And what is ice? Water.—Cannot I then believe in God what you admit in nature?

The several passages of scripture which are urged by the adversaries of the Trinity, *as the Father is greater than I**, —*at what day and hour no man knoweth, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father†*, are only perplexing to those who forget to distinguish between Jesus Christ as Man, and Jesus Christ as God.—Every argument and proof which establishes the divinity of Jesus Christ, establishes the Trinity.—Nothing can be more false or unfair than the writings of Mr. Gibbon on this subject. Bishop Bull's Defence of the Faith is an excellent work, as also Barnard's Divinity of Jesus Christ.

* John xiv. 18.

† Mark xiii. 32.

produces in the world. Was Christianity the religion of enthusiasts, did a mad fanaticism reign throughout, an explanation might easily be found in the varied conformation of the human mind. But since the reverse is obvious—since learning, talents, and sound judgment, form the qualifications of the believer as well as unbeliever, let a philosophic reason be given why the educated Deist rejects the faith and religion of Jesus Christ, which the instructed Christian from principle professes ; and why the one strenuously opposes a testimony which the other readily admits, and is ready to seal with his blood. It is of this question that I demand a philosophical elucidation, or a satisfactory reason why there should exist such a contradictory result. Will it be said that our minds are differently constituted and endowed?—the case supposes them to be equally enriched by nature and art. Will it be said that either one or the other has acted without a motive, and against his

judgment?—both profess to be directed by the best of motives, that of reason and conviction.

Here, therefore, is a difficulty which I believe I may defy philosophy to explain. Let religion, then, solve what philosophy cannot;—let her for once be heard in her own cause. It is in the passions and vices of our species that we shall discover the reason;—it is they which, by first influencing the will, corrupt the understanding. Religion is readily embraced by those who have freedom of election; but when the passions domineer, the human mind is degraded to a state of slavery, and, instead of acting from a pure and noble principle, becomes the most abject and servile flatterer. They admit no other independence in the person, than such as does not interfere with that dominion which they have acquired; a sentiment continually urged by the Fathers: “A corrupted heart,” says St. Austin, “may see the truth, but can “ never like it, or find it amiable.” It is

to no purpose that you enlighten and instruct yourselves, if your doubts are in your passions.—Religion will be clear, when you shall become chaste, temperate, and just ; and you will have faith, when you shall cease to have vice. Religion, my Friends, is not the fruit of contentions and disputes, not of learning, and an ostentatious display of argument, but of innocence, prayer, and an humble confidence in God. *And the world shall be judged, that is, condemned, said Jesus Christ ; Because the light is come into the world, and men loved darkness, rather than the light ; for their works were evil. For every one that doth evil hateth the light, and cometh not to the light, that his works may not be reprov'd. But he that doth truth cometh to the light, that his works may be made manifest, because they are done in God*.*

It is but in justice, therefore, to truth and religion, that in distinguishing these characters, we mark those, who are thus morally disqualified from receiving the

* John iii. 19, 20, 21.

doctrine we preach. The point I intend to enforce, this day, is the divinity of that same Jesus Christ who suffered for the world. The proofs I shall adduce will be clear, positive, and wholly sufficient for those who possess a virtuous heart, and uncorrupted mind. But for the conviction of the vicious, for the satisfaction of the proud, I plainly declare, they will not suffice.—On them alone we can expect to make no impression :—we may confound, but we shall never convert them.—We may detect all their sophisms, and leave them without an answer, but shall never induce them to confess, that the crucified Jesus is the only begotten Son of God. *The Jews ask for signs, says the apostle, and the Greeks seek after wisdom, but we preach Jesus Christ crucified, a stumbling block to the Jews, and a folly to the Gentiles.**

The philosophers of modern, like those of ancient date, recoil from a religion which confounds their wisdom, humbles their pride, and restrains those passions they are so ea-

* 1 Cor. i. 22.

ger to indulge. Interested in the opposition they make, they decry Christianity, because they know Christianity has condemned them :—they reject the scriptures, because in every page they read the sentence pronounced against them :—they ridicule the cross of Christ as a folly, because it is the sign of their eternal reprobation. Name me the instructed individual, who professes to deny the divine character of Jesus Christ, and is an humble, chaste, and virtuous man—whose soul has never been defiled by vice, and I will go to the end of the earth, to behold that miracle, that prodigy of nature. Shall we say it of a Bolingbroke, a Hume, or the other deistical writers of our own country? Shall we say it of a Socinus and a Voltaire, and the antagonists of Christianity on the Continent? Have any of them been spoken of as men of virtue? Have they not been for the most part infamous for their lives, and the apologists for vice?

Indeed, my Brethren, it is often difficult for us to uncover the secret corruption of a

private life;—it often happens that a vicious heart remains concealed from public notice* ; but in the last scene of their career, their real character is fully displayed, and at the approach of death, we are mostly able to form a true judgment of these deists. While the confidence of the fervent Christian becomes strengthened, as he draws near to his end, the boldness of the infidel abandons him—his mind is agitated, black despair is seated in his countenance, and Judas like he employs, if he can, his own violent hand to terminate his existence†. Such is the solution of the problem of infidelity, such is the death of the deist, and it is alone, to the wide diffusion of the principles of Deism, that we may ascribe the swelling lists of suicides,

* “The only thing for us,” wrote Voltaire, “is to declare ourselves better Christians than those who accuse us of not being Christians.” Letter lxxxi to d’Alembert.

† Such were the continual terrors which haunted the minds of Mr. Hobbs and Mr. Thomas Paine, that for many years before their deaths, they would never allow themselves to be left alone either night or day.

which almost daily disgraces every walk of life.

In proving to you the divinity of Jesus Christ, I shall not pretend to go deep into the mystery, or attempt to explain it in a manner that might satisfy the eager curiosity of your reason,—the task would be too much even for an angel, and I might as soon attempt to tell you what is God. I shall, therefore, simply lay before you, the proofs of his human and divine natures, and having established both, leave it for your faith to assent to the mysterious union, though your understandings be unequal to comprehend it. The argument will be the same, that proves the presence and union of body and soul in man. I observe in him, for instance, the operations of a body ; he respire, eats, speaks and moves ; I also observe in him, the operations of a spiritual soul ; he thinks, reasons, and remembers ; therefore, I conclude without doubt, that he has a body and a soul united in the same person, since they

never act but together, though I am at a loss to understand how this union is effected. And this argument will clearly expose the folly of those who oppose the union of the divine and human natures in the person of Jesus Christ, on the mighty reason that they cannot conceive the mystery. As well may they come forward and tell us, we are men without souls, because they cannot conceive how matter and spirit should ever be united. And thanks to our infidel writers, I suppose it was in this profundity of wisdom, that one of the most eminent statesmen* this country ever produced, lately on his death-bed was led to ask his intimate friend, if he really believed man had a soul. *I confess to the Father, lord of heaven and earth, that if these things are concealed from the wise and prudent thou hast revealed them to little ones†.*

Before I proceed, I conceive myself justified in putting two simple questions,

* Mr. Charles Fox.

† Luke x. 21.

which are: whether you will admit the testimony of men, as authority sufficient for believing facts—and whether any particular exception is to be made to the prejudice of this evidence, when facts become proofs of Christianity? If, in the language of Mr. Hume, you answer me, that the testimony of men furnishes no certitude whatever, then I think it will be advisable for me at once to throw off the character of a Christian preacher, and for you to commit your libraries to the flames; since your answer tends to dissolve society itself, and to remit you to a state of savage barbarism, more savage than that in which any nation of the earth is found. If, on the other hand, you tell me, that credit is alone to be refused to their testimony, when they attempt to establish a supernatural fact, because such is inadmissible by its very nature, I must reply, that though this be completely begging the question, yet supposing the existence of God, I conceive men as qualified to give

testimony of a supernatural fact, as of one that is strictly natural;—and consequently as there is an equal motive for assenting to each, to each is due an equal credit. Thus, my Brethren, if the indefective testimony of men be sufficient to certify the existence and the death of Lazarus, the same indefective testimony is equally able to certify, that this identical Lazarus was miraculously raised from the dead by a prophet of God, after he had lain corrupted four days in his tomb:—and, if human evidence can certify to me, that the man Jesus Christ was crucified and buried, this same evidence can also certify to me, that he afterwards ascended into heaven, in the presence of many, asserting himself to be the Saviour of the world, and the Son of God. I will observe then, on the whole evidence, which relates to the person of Jesus Christ, that never was testimony more complete and satisfactory, never more positive, never more consonant, than that which is given by the prophets and evangelists, by

history, and the events which come immediately under our own observation*. The conclusion, therefore is, that if ever we are to admit human testimony at all, we must in preference receive it here, and that if we reject the facts which it has recorded,

* Infidels say, that the facts, proofs, and events, which are employed to establish Christianity, are the mere effect of chance, and might have existed independently of the christian scheme of redemption. — In the same manner, materialists say, that the universe, and that noble being MAN, might have been the result of a fortuitous meeting of atoms, which by some secret chemical process settled in the present order of things, much in the same way as the nightly dews are condensed upon our windows in a frosty temperature of the atmosphere. — But though it be possible, that some irregular substances, such as a block of marble might be formed after this mode, can any one conceive it possible, that the whole universe, with all the animal creation, could have been thus brought into existence? Oh Philosophy! where is thy wisdom? In the same manner, though the facts, proofs, and events, which speak for the revealed system of redemption, be individually susceptible of a different interpretation from that which is at present given them by Christians, yet, when we observe, how they all bear upon and help to establish the same object, it is equally inconceivable how an infidel can be found to maintain that such a combination of circumstances could have been any thing but divine ordination.

there are none on which we can consistently rely.

As my object, on this occasion, is principally to establish the divine character of Jesus Christ, it will be sufficient for me, in proving his human nature, to observe, that as he distinctly declared himself the Son of Man,—as he exhibited all the operations of a human body and soul,—as he grew up from infancy, lived and died like the other children of Adam, it must be concluded that Jesus Christ was truly man, having a body and soul like one of us. It will be unnecessary, then, for me to dwell any longer on this point, since his sacred divinity is now the object of our attention; in proving which, I shall simply employ the evidence of scripture, and the evidence of his miracles. Independently of those transcendant qualifications and sublime endowments, which the sacred scriptures throughout attribute to this Son of David, there are some passages which deserve a more particular notice, since they po-

sitively and formally attest the divinity of the Messiah.

In the first place, then, I wish you to observe, that the term Jehovah is a Hebrew word, never used but to express the great God, Creator of heaven and earth. JEHOVAH, says the prophet Jeremiah, *is the true God, he is the living God, and an everlasting being* *. And David exclaims : *Thou whose name alone is JEHOVAH, art the most high over all the earth.* And though in our modern languages we are forced to substitute a less determinate expression, such as Lord, yet it must always bear the precise sense of the original, Jehovah, which both Jews and Christians acknowledge to be incommunicable to any being but the eternal God. And so great is the Jewish respect for this word, that they will not even suffer their lips to pronounce it, but whenever it occurs in reading, they use the expression Adonai in

* Jer. x. 10.

its place. Now, my Brethren, if we can show that the Messiah, who was promised to the Jews, is often styled by the prophets Jehovah, we shall prove that the Messiah was pointed out by the prophets as a divine person, the Lord God of heaven and earth. In the prophecy of Jeremiah we read*: *Behold the days come, saith Jehovah, that I will raise up to David a righteous branch; and a king shall reign and shall be wise, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In these days Juda shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell confidently; and this is the name which they shall call him, JEHOVAH OUR JUST ONE.*

In the prophecy of Zacharias† we also read: *Sing praise, and rejoice, oh daughter of Sion: for lo I come, and will dwell in the midst of thee, saith JEHOVAH. And many nations shall be joined to JEHOVAH in that day, and shall be my people: and I*

* Jer. xxiii. 5.

† Zach. ii. 10.

will dwell in the midst of thee, and thou shalt know that the Lord of Hosts hath sent me unto thee.

In the book of the prophet Osee*, Jehovah speaks and says: *I will no more have mercy upon the house of Israel, but I will utterly forget them. And I will have mercy upon the house of Juda, and will save them by JEHOVAH their God.*

Again in the prophecy of Zacharias †: *I will strengthen them in JEHOVAH, and they shall walk in his name, saith JEHOVAH.*

Now, my Brethren, compare these passages with the two following, which I shall extract from the prophet Isaiah ‡: *A child is born to us, and a son is given to us, and the government is upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, God the Mighty, the Father of the world to come, the Prince of Peace.*

The same prophet writes§: *Thus saith Jehovah: Men of stature shall come over*

* Osee i. 6. † Zach. x. 2. ‡ Isa. ix. 6. § Ib. xlv. 15.

unto thee, and they shall be thine; they shall walk after thee, in chains they shall come over; and they shall worship thee, they shall make supplication unto thee; only in thee is God, and there is no God beside thee. Verily thou art a hidden God, the God of Israel, the Saviour. The same is also signified by the Royal Psalmist, when adverting to the Messiah *: *his everlasting kingdom—his eternal throne—his generation before the day star—his seat at the right-hand of God—his adoration by all nations and angels,* are expressions, which can never be applied to any but a divine person, and that this person is also cloathed in human nature, is evident from the context.

Having laid before you this evidence of the prophets, we will now proceed to the evangelists. It is well known that the apostle St. John sat down to write the gospel of Jesus Christ for the express pur-

* Ps. lxxi. 44. xcvi. 109.

pose of proving his divinity. He thus sublimely opens : *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. And the Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us, (and we saw his glory, the glory as it were of the only begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth. For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.* My Brethren, as you observe, I make no comments on these texts, which speak for themselves to an humble and an honest mind. For the proud, the impious, and the unchaste, I fear they will not suffice. There are many other passages in the New Testament, which clearly indicate the divinity of Jesus Christ hidden under the form of man. In St. Matthew we read that Jesus Christ put this question to his apostles * : *Whom do men say that the Son of Man is ? But they said : some John the*

* Matt. xvi. 13.

Baptist, and other some Elias, and others Jeremias, or one of the prophets. Jesus saith to them: But whom do you say that I am? Simon Peter answered and said: Thou art Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answering, said to him: Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona; because flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but my Father who is in heaven.

The same is also evident from the whole of the fifth chapter of St. John, wherein Jesus Christ labours to shew the Jews, how in his nature he is identified with God the Father*. *Amen I say unto you, the Son cannot do any thing himself but what he sees the Father doing. For what things soever he doth, these the Son also doth in like manner.* And in the tenth chapter of the same evangelist we observe the repetition of this declaration; as also the sense in which the Jews understood his words†: *I and the Father are one, said he. The Jews then*

* St. John v. 19. † Ib. ver. 30.

*took up stones to stone him. Jesus answered them : Many good works I have shewed you from my Father ; for which of those works do you stone me ? The Jews answered him : For a good work we stone thee not, but for blasphemy, and because that thou, being a Man, makest thyself God. Besides, upon what other charge did the Jews ground the sentence of his condemnation to the cross *?—His expiring with a supernatural effort produced this testimony from the mouth of a pagan : This man indeed was the Son of God†.*

I have already adduced the testimony of St. Paul, whose Epistle to the Philip-
pians was written many years before St. John composed his Gospel, and consequently is evidence of the early faith of the church on this matter. I shall now close this great body of scriptural proof by one text of this same apostle from his Epistle to the Romans ‡. *From our fathers,*

* Matt. xxvi. 63. Mark xv. 61. Luke xxii. 71. John xix. 7.
† Mark xv. 39. ‡ Rom. ix. 5.

he writes, *cometh Jesus Christ according to the flesh, who is God over all, blessed for ever.*

My Brethren, I have before noticed to you, that the Jews objected as blasphemy to Jesus Christ, his styling himself God ; which objection he immediately met, by shewing them how to distinguish between him who was not, and him who proved himself to be a blasphemer. *Is it not, said he*, written in your law, I said you are gods ? If he called them gods to whom the word of God was spoken, and the scripture cannot be broken ; do you say of him whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world, thou blasphemest, because I said I am the Son of God ? If I do not the works of my Father, believe me not ; but if I do, tho' you will not believe me, believe the works ; that you may know that the Father is in me, and I in the Father.* It is the miracles which Jesus Christ wrought which stand in attestation of the truth of

* John x. 34. xiv. 9.

these declarations, and which secure the mind of the Christian against the very shadow of a doubt. They are so essentially important, my Brethren, that in ordering our faith they should never be disjoined ; they are the two terms whose sum, in a moral light, absolutely involves the divinity of Jesus Christ. Like the premises of a syllogistic argument, you may object to either member, but if you concede them, the comprehending consequence cannot be withheld, without a solecism in reasoning. For, my Brethren, you must clearly perceive, that although man may thus positively assert, it is only God who can confirm by a miracle *; and therefore to suppose that the Deity would work a miracle to establish a lie, nay to sanction a blasphemy, is an idea which surely can never enter a sound understanding.

It cannot be necessary for me here to go far into the account of the miracles of

* John ix. 31.

Jesus Christ, which are detailed in the gospels.—The evangelists inform us, that it was to them he continually appealed, in arguing with the Jews, and in instructing the apostles ; they were works which no man had ever done, and they clearly proved him to be the accomplishment of the divine promise to Moses *: *I will raise them up a prophet out of the midst of their brethren like to thee.*

I will just beg you to observe, that the miracles of Jesus were wrought in the presence of an infinite number of persons; that they took place in the great city of Jerusalem, or in its immediate neighbourhood ; that Herod himself had heard of his fame, and was desirous of seeing him work a miracle ; and that they are recorded by profane historians, as well as those we consider sacred. Porphyrius, a pagan, writes†: “ It is exceeding wonderful what testimony the gods do give of the singular piety and sanctity of Jesus ; for which

* Deut. xxviii. 18. John v. 46.

† L. de Laud. Phil.

“ they avouch him rewarded with immorta-
 “ lity.” And the famous Jewish historian,
 Flavius Josephus, who witnessed the des-
 truction of Jerusalem, thus speaks of him,
 whilst describing those events which
 preceded that disaster of his country*.
 “ There was at this time, one Jesus, a wise
 “ man, if it be lawful to call him a man; a
 “ worker of most wonderful miracles, and
 “ a master and teacher of all such men, as
 “ willingly were content to embrace the
 “ truth.”†

* Ant. lib. xviii. c. 7.

† This passage has been contested by critics,—but either Josephus mentioned our Saviour in his history or he did not.—If he did, let any one produce a different passage from the one in dispute.—If he did not—such an affected silence about events, which had been so much divulged, and had occasioned so much conversation in the world, is more expressive than a volume.—He speaks about John the Baptist and St. James, and why forget their master? “ It was believed
 “ among the Jews, he says, that the army of Herod was des-
 “ troyed by the just vengeance of heaven, on account of John,
 “ who was surnamed the Baptist.—For the Tetrarch put him
 “ to death, though he was a most good man,—employed in
 “ exhorting the Jews to virtue, and in particular to piety and

The miracles of Christ, to which I would particularly direct your attention, are the raising of Lazarus from death to life, after he had been buried four days*, also the daughter of the ruler of the synagoguet†, and the widow's son at the gate of the city of Naim‡. Moreover the curing of the cripple, at the pool of Bethesda in Jerusalem§, as also the man sick of the palsy||, and the feeding of 5000 with five loaves and two fishes¶. It was these miracles which stirred up the jealousy of the Jewish priests against Jesus Christ, and determined them in their malice, to destroy him. I might also lay a special stress on the great miracle

"justice, as also to the purification of baptism," Joseph. lib. 18. Ant. c. 7.—If John was a good man—our Saviour must have been the Messiah; since he called himself his precursor.—If Jesus was not God-man, St. John must have been an impostor, &c. &c.—*Behold the lamb of God, &c.*—Pliny also attests, what the primitive Christians thought on this head. In his 102d Letter, to the Emperor Trajan, he writes, "that
 "on certain days they were accustomed to meet before it
 "was light, and by turns, to sing psalms to Christ, as to
 "God." Lib. x.

* John xi. † Mark ix. ‡ Luke vii. § John v.

|| Mark ix. ¶ Matt. xiv.

of his own resurrection. attested by his guards and so many others*, but, my Brethren, the miracle which in my idea is the most striking to us, because always standing and immediately under our own observation, is the completion of his command to twelve poor men, *go and teach all nations*, and the subsequent spread of Christianity to every corner of the earth. Never had a king, in this world, so extensive and illustrious a dominion as Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews,—never was any standard triumphantly carried through so many nations as the standard of his cross. *We preach Christ crucified†.*

* Matt. xxvii.

† What, moreover, will infidel philosophers say to that widely diffused opinion of a universal conqueror springing from Judea, at a time, when the whole world was subject to the Roman power, and not a sword could be drawn in Asia, Africa, or Europe, without the permission of Cæsar. Suetonius writes, “an ancient and constant tradition had spread over all the *East*, that by a decree of the fates, men coming from Judea, should conquer the world.—Percrebuerat ORIENTE toto *vetus* et constans opinio, esse in fatis, ut, Judæâ profecti, rerum potirentur.”

Step forth, then, ye miserable philosophers, come forth ye infidels, I summons you here before me;—behold the strong proofs on which the divinity of Jesus Christ is grounded. Talk not to us of your repugnance to miracles, talk not of difficulties in submitting to the Christian faith, if after all, Jesus Christ were as you say, a mere man, and no God, I maintain this would be a greater miracle than any I have preached, and far more difficult for the understanding to admit, than the most sublime mystery of the Christian religion*.

Tacitus also writes, “ it was believed by many, that it had
“ been declared in some antient writings of priests, that at
“ that time, the *East* should become powerful, and that men
“ from Judea should make themselves masters of the world.”

“ Pluribus persuasio in erat, antiquis sacerdotum libris
“ contineri eo ipso tempore fore, ut valesceret ORIENS, pro-
“ fectique Judæa, rerum potirentur.”

* The argument of St. Austin for the divinity of Christ, against the Arian Bishop Maximin, is unanswerable.—“ Cla-
“ mour, he says, as much as you please, about the Father
“ being greater, the Son less,—the answer will be, but the
“ greater and lesser are two.—Yet it is not said, the Lord thy
“ God the greater, is one Lord; but it is said, the Lord thy

The very possibility, then, I must deny, for it would completely unhinge every moral principle in man, dissolve every notion we entertain of the goodness, justice, and wisdom of God, and necessarily introduce that system of atheism which we know to be the child of antichristian infidelity*.

Oh then, my fellow creatures, will ye oppose this mystery of divine goodness, of love and of mercy, merely because it is excessive? Will ye throw it all back upon him and say, thou canst not have so much benignity in thy nature? will ye consent that human reason remain puzzled and confounded, rather than embrace with an humble and strong faith, this act of infinite wisdom and charity, which at once explains the whole providence of God

“ God, is one Lord. Neither is it said, there is no other equal
 “ to me—but there is no other but me:—either therefore con-
 “ fess that the Father and Son, are one Lord God, or openly
 “ deny that the Lord God is Christ.” Chap. xxiii. p. 727.
 tom. 8. Edit. Ben.

* Spirit of Controversy, p. 193.

towards man ; and tends to glorify the Creator by exalting the creature ? Ye are the works of my hands, saith God, *Can a woman forget her infant, so as not to have pity on the son of her womb ? and if she should forget, yet I will not forget thee**. Yes, he has verified this, he has loved you more than *his only begotten Son*, whom he delivered up to death, even the death of the cross, that you might have life and salvation through him. Wherefore, Brethren, embrace with love this incarnate God of charity, and henceforth consider well the high dignity to which your nature has been exalted.— By its union with the Eternal Word, you are become the brethren and very members of Jesus Christ, the sons of God by adoption, and in that point of view you are elevated above the angels and the choirs of cherubim ; all the glory with which Jesus Christ is honoured and distinguished must

* Isaiah xlix. 15.

reflect on you. Never again shall he divest himself of that humanity, which he has assumed ; the homage of all creatures shall be for ever offered to him, as man as well as God, and thus our nature shall be glorified before that of all other beings. As he debased himself to the lowness of our humanity, our humanity in its turn is exalted to the level of his divinity, and placed for ever on the right hand. It is at this consideration that the church breaks forth, into this exclamation on the eve of Easter ; Oh happy fault ! oh fortunate sin of Adam, through which we have been covered with so much glory ! oh happy disgrace which led to such an exaltation and honour. I cannot conclude this discourse better, than in the words of his enemy Rousseau.

“ The sanctity of the gospel speaks
 “ to my soul ; consider the writings of
 “ philosophers with all their boast ; how
 “ trifling in comparison ! Is it possible
 “ that a work, at the same time so sub-

“lime and simple, can be the work of
“men? Is it possible that he, whose his-
“tory it forms, can be no more than a
“man himself? Do we there observe the
“style of an enthusiast, or ambitious sec-
“tary? What sweetness! what purity of
“manners! what amiable grace in his
“instructions! how sublime his max-
“ims! what profound wisdom in his
“speeches! what presence of mind, what
“propriety, what justness in his answers!
“what a command over his passions!
“Where is the man, where is the philo-
“sopher, who knows how to act, to suf-
“fer, and to die without weakness, and
“without ostentation? When Plato draws
“his imaginary just one, covered with all
“the opprobrium of guilt, and worthy of
“every recompense of virtue, he exactly
“describes Jesus Christ. The resem-
“blance is so striking, that all the fathers
“have noticed it, and it is not possible to
“be mistaken. How prejudiced, how blind
“must he not be, who dares to draw a com-

“ parison between the son of Sophronisqua
 “ and the Son of Mary ! How different is
 “ one from the other ! Socrates dying
 “ without grief, without ignominy, ea-
 “ sily supports his character to the last ;
 “ and if his life had not been honoured
 “ by this quiet death, we should doubt
 “ if Socrates, with all his genius, was
 “ more than a sophist. He invented,
 “ they say, the doctrine of the duties
 “ of common life. Others before had
 “ practically taught it ; he did no more
 “ than put into the form of lessons
 “ what they had exemplified. Aristides
 “ had been just, before Socrates said
 “ what justice was. Leonidas had died
 “ for his country, before Socrates made
 “ patriotism a virtue. Sparta had been
 “ sober, before Socrates praised tempe-
 “ rance. Before he had defined virtue,
 “ Greece abounded with virtuous men.
 “ But where had Jesus learnt among the
 “ antients this elevated and pure mora-
 “ lity, of which he alone gave the lessons

“ and example? From the bosom of the
 “ most furious fanaticism, the most sub-
 “ lime wisdom made itself heard; and the
 “ simplicity of the most heroic virtues ho-
 “ noured the most vile of all nations. The
 “ death of Socrates, quietly philosophis-
 “ ing with his friends, is the most agree-
 “ able that can be desired; that of Jesus
 “ expiring in torments, insulted, scoffed
 “ at, and cursed by a whole people, is the
 “ most horrible that can be conceived.
 “ Socrates taking the cup of poison,
 “ blesses the man who presents it bathed
 “ in tears; Jesus in the midst of the most
 “ cruel torments, prays for his bloody
 “ executioners. Yes, if Socrates lived
 “ and died like a philosopher, Jesus
 “ lived and died like a God. Shall
 “ we say that the history of the gos-
 “ pel is nothing but an invention? My
 “ friend, we are not accustomed to work
 “ such inventions; and the facts relating
 “ to Socrates, of which no one doubts,
 “ are less attested than those of Jesus

“ Christ.—In short, it is evading without
 “ destroying the difficulty ; it would be
 “ less easy to conceive that several per-
 “ sons should have agreed to fabricate this
 “ work, than that an individual should
 “ have furnished the subject. Never did
 “ any of the Jewish authors exhibit the
 “ same style, the same morality : and the
 “ gospel has such grand, striking, and
 “ inimitable marks of truth, that the in-
 “ ventor would be more wonderful than
 “ the hero.”*

* Emile.



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 38, Duke-street, Grosvenor-sq.

"Christ.—In short, it is evading without
 "destroying the difficulty; it would be
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 "the hero."



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A
DEFENCE
OF THE
ANCIENT FAITH,
CONTINUED.

SECTION VI.

THE HISTORY OF THE
CHURCH OF ENGLAND

A

TO THE HISTORY OF THE
DEFENCE

OF THE

ANCIENT FAITH.

A SECOND CONTINUATION.

By the same Author.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

LONDON: Printed by J. DODD, in Pall-mall.

MDCCLXXII.

By the same Author.

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MDCCLXXII.

SERMON VI.

ON THE DIVINE FOUNDATION OF THE
CHRISTIAN RELIGION.

You are fellow-citizens with the saints and domestics of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone. Ephes. ii. 19, 20.

AS I propose this day to trace, in an historical form, the several authorities, which since the beginning of the world have been the channels of divine religious faith, you must not expect that I can do more, at present, than detail them to you, as a series of facts notoriously established ;—facts which it will be only necessary for me to collect into one view, to enable you to mark their gradation, their connexion and dependance. And while you consider

them as branches of the same system ;—the same divine œconomy gradually unfolding itself in the blaze of stronger evidence,—just as the flower unbosoms its beauty before the mid-day sun ;—you will moreover remark, that the changes, which have occurred in religion, are only the epochs of her history ;—and that whether we view religious faith as founded on the original revelations to man in paradise,—or on the divine instructions to the patriarchs,—or on the written law of Moses and the prophets,—or on the chief corner-stone, Christ himself,—or whether it be built on the foundation of the apostles, the letter of the New Testament, or the Church of Christ, it is still but ONE,—its end is truth, and its ultimate foundation is God himself. *You are fellow-citizens with the saints and domestics of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone.* Ephes. ii. 19, 20.

Soon as the eternal Word, then, had

resolved in the boundless extent of his mercy, to become by incarnation the Redeemer of fallen man,—soon as he had decreed that every individual of the species, should be a purchased creature, a ransomed captive,—in order to embrace in one act all the designs of his justice towards himself as well as towards man, he moreover ordained, that in quality of a reflecting agent and intelligent being, the creature should make him a reciprocal return of love, confidence, and submission. To the natural obligation, therefore, of pursuing an upright moral line of conduct, for which the light of reason was sufficient, (man having already a traditional knowledge of his first beginning and last end),—the Redeemer also enjoined each individual to live in the expectation of his coming one day in the flesh, as the regenerator of mankind; thus making himself, together with the eternal Father, the object of their faith, their worship and their love.

Such from the beginning of the world were the true adorers of God,—such were the real worshippers in spirit till the Messiah himself appeared amongst men, to shew them a more perfect way. They formed that great and universal church, which existed four thousand years, containing the just of all nations and tongues;—spread over the face of the earth, they were mingled indeed with the wicked and unbelieving part of mankind, but easily distinguished by the sanctity of their lives, and the purity of their worship. This consisted in those fervent acts of faith, hope and charity, they daily made to God, as also in those innumerable sacrifices and oblations, by which this Church individually did homage to the Sovereign Lord, and figuratively expressed that sublime act of religion which the Messiah himself was afterwards to perform for the sins of the world.

Their faith professed a steady belief in that adorable BEING who created them,

with all other things, by his Almighty power; and who, uncontroled himself, governed *them* by his providence, and destined for them, in another state, the recompence of eternal felicity. Their acts of hope acknowledged an entire confidence in a God Redeemer, purporting an unshaken reliance on those early promises, which had been made to man, of salvation and happiness through a Messiah;—promises transmitted by universal tradition, as well as confirmed by many signal favours to particular Patriarchs.*—Their acts of charity in fine were the sincere language of the heart, wafting the most ardent love and affections towards God, their creator and benefactor, and honouring him as the supreme object of their souls esteem. The Old Testament has given us a particular account of many of these holy individuals, and we may hope

* It is worthy of remark that the fabulous histories of the Pagan Poets, were but general corruptions of these Divine Revelations to man.

that Job, whose heart (chap. xxxi.) was with God in every action of life, whose faith in a Redemer (chap. xix. 25) was lively and solid, and who daily offered his sacrifices to the Lord, (chap. vii. 5.)—was only a brilliant example of those virtues which were common to the faithful servants of the Almighty.

Thus were laid the broad and extensive foundations of the patriarchal church of Christ, by which as the apostle writes, (Heb. xi. 2.) *the ancients obtained a testimony*. Within the pale of this simple, yet holy fabric, the Lord was pleased however to enclose a sanctuary for himself, where his own worship combined with that of his Divine Son, might be the professed and more special object of attention;—where the whole mystery of man's redemption might be figuratively described in the civil and religious history of one family;—where the sacred manuscripts and archives of heaven, might be safely lodged for the general benefit of all nations;—and where

every circumstance in the person, character and life of the Messiah might be gradually unfolded. Within this sanctuary, formed of the tribe of Israel, the Lord was to maintain a continued succession of Prophets, who should treat the sublimest subjects in the language of inspiration, and reveal the hidden secrets of futurity.— Here a regular appointed ministry was, exclusively, to offer to the Almighty, with the most solemn pomp, that public worship which he had prescribed for himself:— here every appointed rite and ceremony was ordained by the Deity in reference to the Messiah, or as emblematical of some future dispensation in his Church:—finally this sanctuary was to be *the second tabernacle, called the holy of holies*, (Heb. ix. 3.) the inward temple in which the Messiah would appear to man, accomplishing all the predictions of the Prophets:—in short, it was the dressed altar on which he was to be sacrificed for the sins of the world—and the figure of that more holy church,

which founded by himself on the foundations of the other, would be that real temple of the Almighty and sanctuary of grace, which had been the expectation of all nations from the beginning of the world.

It was in conformity to this plan, that previously to the arrival of the Messiah, every religious ordinance and institution,—every divine injunction and dispensation, was a prophetic figure of some circumstance in the history of Christ, or a representation of some part of his Gospel. “It is incontestable,” says an learned writer *, “that from the beginning of the world, God had revealed to men the mystery of their future redemption ; and had ordained that a faith in this mystery, or the expectation of a Redeemer, should be the basis of religion. It is therefore true that the Christian religion, is substantially as ancient as the world ;

* Preface de l'Histoire abrégée de la Religion, avant la venue de Jésus-Christ, par l'Homond.

since one and the same God, has always been acknowledged for the Creator; and one and the same Christ for the Saviour of man. Just as we ourselves pass through the different stages of life, so religion has passed through different states of existence; it has grown and expanded, yet never changed. Appearing under the natural and Mosaic law, in its state of infancy, it has, under the evangelical law, reached the age of maturity. Religion, writes the illustrious Bossuet, has always been one and the same; Christ, placed between the two testaments, is the corner stone of both. We say of him that he was—is—and ever will be. That religion, of which he is the object, existed under the old law,—actually subsists under the gospel, and will subsist in eternity, where Jesus Christ, united to his elect, will subject all things to his Father, and together with him will be praised, adored and glorified, for everlasting ages. Let no one complain, exclaims St. Leo, of the conduct of God in the

work of our redemption. Let it not be said, that too long our Lord deferred his coming in the flesh ; as if men during that period, had been deprived of the benefit of those mysteries which he has since wrought. The incarnation of the WORD, decreed from all eternity in the councils of God, produced, ere its accomplishment, the same effects as at present ; and never at the most distant period of antiquity, was the mystery of man's redemption without its fruit. What the apostles preached, the prophets had predicted ; and the great work of redemption, though long delayed, was the uninterrupted object of faith."

"It was not therefore," continues this Father, "in consequence of any new determination of Providence, nor through a compassion slow in its effects, that God provided for the redemption of man, by the incarnation of his only Son ; but from the beginning of the world and for ever, he made the salvation of all men, the effect of this one individual cause. True it is,

the grace of God has been showered upon us more abundantly since the temporal birth of Christ; but it is not, at that period, that we are to date its first communication, since the just in every age have been exclusively sanctified by it. This great mystery of the love of God, which is now preached in every part of the world, is connected with so fruitful a virtue, that even when merely predicted and prefigured, it produced in all, who by faith rested on the promise of God, the same salutary effects, as we ourselves have reaped from its accomplishment. For it was by this faith that the just were made holy, previously to the coming of the Saviour, and were united as members to the mystical body of Christ. *They died*, writes St. Paul, (Heb. xi. 13.) *according to faith, not having received the promises, but beholding them afar off and saluting them, and confessing that they were pilgrims and strangers on earth.*

Such was the grand and splendid pre-

paration the Almighty had laid out for the establishment of his Church under the Gospel, and when the fulness of time arrived, marked in the decrees of eternal Wisdom, THE ANGEL OF THE COVENANT THE MESSIAH came forth, and in his own person exhibited the explanation of every prophecy and religious dispensation from the beginning of the world. *Think not*, said he to the world, (Matt. v. 17.) *that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets. I am not come to destroy but to fulfil.* HE was the key that was to unlock every mystery — the point at which the prophecies were to concentrate, — the hidden corner-stone, on which the whole of the figurative fabric of the old law was founded. And in this manner the eternal Father was pleased to glorify his only Son, whom he had chosen to become the head of the corner under the covenant of grace. Like the column from whence two arches spring, the divine Jesus united in himself the Old and the New Testament,

and as the one terminated so the other in him began.

The figurative law, therefore, which closed at the death, was cancelled by the blood of Christ. He had sanctified it, by conforming to its precepts and ordinances; and his life exhibited a model of that virtue, which might be attained under the natural and Mosaic dispensations. The principal object of his ministry was to convince the Jews, that he was the Messiah whom they expected and that had been promised to their Fathers. Rejected by the Synagogue, however of which he was the *corner-stone*, he became the foundation of a new fabric, more holy, more perfect, more entirely his own. *He built it on the foundation of the apostles, himself being the chief corner-stone. In whom all the building being framed together, groweth up into a holy temple in the Lord. In whom we also are built together into a habitation of God in the spirit.* (Ephes. ii. 20.) Thus having fulfilled every object of his mission on

earth,—having paid to the justice of his Father, the debt of our ransom, and fully instructed the apostles in his doctrine, he gave them power to preach it in his name to the rest of the world, till the conclusion of time. After which the divine Jesus triumphantly ascended into heaven, leading captivity captive, and as man took his seat on the right hand of the Father, bearing the eternal trophies of his victory over sin and death. And at this date properly commences the era of the Christian Church.

Within ten days after the ascension of our Lord, the Almighty in the third person of the Sacred Trinity, visibly descended on the apostles on the Feast of Pentecost. This day was remarkable for being the anniversary of the promulgation of the Mosaic law to the twelve tribes of Israel, from Mount Sinai: a day on which the new covenant,—the doctrine of the Messiah,—or the Gospel of Jesus Christ was publicly promulgated in the capital of

Israel, by these twelve representatives of the twelve tribes, accompanied by the supernatural testimony of signs and miracles. Twelve simple fishermen then suddenly became the accredited apostles of the Lord;—their weak nature assumed the courage and the strength of martyrs;—and Christianity eventually established itself in spite of the most violent opposition from Jews and Gentiles. Idolatry shrunk before the Gospel, and the crucified Jesus, became the adored of all nations. Such were the great distinguishing events of the apostolic age.

During this period, the apostles, under Christ, were the foundation of the law,—the corner-stone of the Gospel they preached. (*Ephes. ii. 20.*) — Their words were the words of God;—not written on tables of wood or stone, but engraven in the mind and lodged in the heart. In this manner the Gospel was orally preached by the apostles, as it had been

verbally delivered to them by the Messiah : and thus the seed of the Word of God, that is the Gospel, was sown, by these faithful *witnesses*, (Acts v. 32.) and rapidly growing up, every where fructified into an abundant harvest. To the present time it has been disseminated, in like manner, thro' succeeding ages, and the assiduous care of each generation has been, merely to distinguish the true seed, and to gather that only, which had been previously and apostolically sown. We are *built upon the foundation of the apostles*. (Ephes. ii. 20.)

In tracing the divine foundations of the Christian religion, of course I can here only refer to them as facts which already stand supported by every requisite evidence: both sacred and profane writers being the vouchers of all I have asserted. In proceeding therefore to the authority of the New Testament, on which I mean to lay a more particular stress, you will observe, that whilst the apostles were occupied in announcing by word of mouth the GOSPEL OF CHRIST, which

is in other words, as I have remarked, THE WORD OF GOD, or the revealed religion prescribed to man by Jesus Christ, —false teachers often distorted their expressions. Therefore with the view, that it might be safely and easily transmitted, by tradition, to succeeding generations, they frequently had occasion to write instructive EPISTLES to particular congregations of Christians. These were received and perused by them with every respectful deference due to the Gospel, or the word of God: and they were honoured and preserved as sacred records, bearing the seal of an inspired minister;—or as written evidences of some part of the unwritten word which had been delivered to them before. Of this description is the short history of the Acts of the Apostles, a work composed by St. Luke, and intended as a brief narrative of some of the first proceedings of the apostles.

The four Evangelists, who were also of the number of the apostles, undertook

each a short history of the life of Christ. The New Testament, thus compiled, was not completed by St. John, (the last of the apostles that committed the word of God to writing) till forty-four years after the preaching of the Gospel; a fact, I wish you particularly to remark.— The writings of these inspired men, seem to have been drawn up in the form of notes, and thus collected into a small volume. Solely directed, moreover by the influence of the inspiring spirit, (which descended on the apostles on the Feast of Pentecost) the Evangelists appear to have written without any concerted plan of agreement; giving individually a narrative of events to which they were witnesses. So that, although their descriptions are different, yet perfect unison and harmony prevail, and there is no part of the Gospel, inscribed by one Evangelist which may not be reconciled with what is recorded by the others.

I have already said, that these writings drawn up in the broken form of notes, are

evidently not a detailed instruction, but rather resembling marginal memorials. As the divine word of inspired men, however, they were intitled to be considered a part of that Gospel, which had been preached from the period of the ascension of our Lord; and were consequently, formally received in that quality by the Church, and transmitted as a last and sacred testament of those who had been the apostles, companions and martyrs of Jesus Christ. This divine testament instantly became a written voucher of the Christian doctrine;—the letter of the law—a volume of revelation.*

* There are three things to be distinguished in regard to the manner in which the scriptures might have been the work of inspiration: which are, first, *inspiration* properly so called—2dly, *assistance*, or special and particular help—3dly, the *impulse* of the Holy Spirit. It is true that *inspiration* is both assistance and the impulse of the Holy Spirit; but the last does not always include a special and particular *assistance*, nor *inspiration* properly so called.—Inspiration properly so called, is an impulse by which God disposes the individual to write, and so directs him, whilst he is writing, as to furnish him not only with thoughts, but even expressions; and conse-

Its authority is sacred as the word of God, — its language the diction of the

quently preserve him from all danger of deserting the line of truth. The authors of sacred scripture are the only *inspired writers*.——Assistance supposes an intention of pronouncing on some point of doctrine already revealed; and it may be defined a direction, or help from God, by which those who pronounce upon any religious truth, are secured in their decision against error and mistake. This is that assistance which has been promised to the Church of Christ, and which consequently renders her infallible.— A pious impulse is nothing more than the effect of that grace, which God ordinarily imparts to those who undertake to write or compose any thing for the greater glory of God, or the edification of his Church, or the benefit of the faithful. This pious impulse however does not confer the privilege of infallibility, on those who labour for this end:—they have received no assurance of that special assistance, which is necessary to secure man against mistake, and therefore as they are liable to fail, so they may deviate from truth.

When we say, therefore, that the scriptures are the work of inspiration, we mean inspiration, properly so called, or as we have defined it: otherwise it would not merit the particular distinction of God's word, which the apostle has marked in these terms:— *Therefore we also give thanks to God without ceasing: because that when you had received of us the word of the hearing of God, you received it not as the word of men, but as it is indeed the word of God who worketh in you that have believed.* (1 Thess. ii. 13.)

inspiring spirit, — and its essence eternal truth.—Given by heaven to men, it places immediately before them, in the simplest and most practical point of view, the divine morality of the Gospel; whilst the sublimer mysteries of revelation, deposited

St. Gregory, to elucidate this point, compares the writer to the pen that a man writes with. “We ought not to inquire, says he, what pen or person has been employed, when we know that the letter comes from an individual of the first rank, to whom we owe every respect.”—This comparison is justified by the Royal Prophet, who says, *My tongue is like the pen of a writer that writes quickly.* (Ps. xliv. 2.) We also observe in the prophet Jeremiah an example by which we may discover the address of the pen that writes so quickly.—The chiefs of the Jewish people sent to Baruch, Judi, the son of Nathaniah, to request him to bring to them the book from which he had read something to the people. When Baruch, the secretary of Jeremiah, was arrived, they asked him, how he had written all the speeches pronounced by Jeremiah. *And Baruch said to them. With his mouth he pronounced all these words, as if he were reading to me; and I wrote them with ink in the book.* (Jer. xxxvi. 18.)—From whence then this flow of words and this great facility of speech, if not from the spirit of God, who inspired this prophet, not only with the thoughts, but even with the words and expressions?—See *Discours Preliminaire sur la Divinité des Saintes Ecritures*, in the learned Abbé de Vence’s edition of the Bible, vol. 1.

with the Church, are merely glanced at, and for the exercise of faith, reserved to be unfolded to them by an other authority.

Such then is the nature, such the divine character of the New Testament; a character, attested by every human and divine evidence that can be required. These evidences, indeed, may not be multiplied now a days, to amuse the vain curiosity of men, because sufficient have been already afforded; as universal tradition testifies. But we have the internal evidence of these writings;—the sublime sanctity of their doctrine, and the verification of their predictions. We have their external testimony;—the conviction of all ages and nations*, the attestation of innumerable miracles, and the use that has been incessantly made of these scriptures by the Church, and ecclesiastical writers, up to the very apostolic age.

* In the moral sense this expression is strictly true.

This I admit has been blasphemously denied by some persons, more distinguished by their audacity, than profundity of learning. The Testament a forgery of the third or fourth century!—As well may they affirm, that the works of Iræneus, Origin, Justin and Tertullian, should equally pass as forgeries of the same date. Their writings are loaded with quotations from the New Testament, *—and are again cited by those Fathers of the church, who flourished immediately in succession; I mean Saints Cyprian, Cyril, Augustin, Basil, Jerome, and a multitude of others:—so that it would not be a stronger proof of barbarous ignorance, to call in question the originality of the works of Virgil, Livy, or Demosthenes, than to assert, that the New Testament was a forgery of the third or fourth century. No—this blasphemy could only be conceived and published by the unread

* There is scarce a passage of scripture which is not referred to in some writing of the ancient Fathers.

low-minded champion of the RIGHTS OF MAN. The numerous versions of the new scriptures, which are found in almost every language and of every date,—the trifling and immaterial variations in their reading, form powerful corroborations of their authenticity. Even those spurious compositions which are called apocryphal, and which have been rejected by the church, because unnoticed by the ancient fathers, become evidence of the existence of apostolic writings, just as counterfeits are evidence of an original coin.

Perhaps it may be said, “all such evidence is human, and as nothing can be stronger than its foundation, the scriptures resting on such evidence, can only be believed as human authority.”—To this we answer—Human testimony may undoubtedly be a sufficient channel for conveying, and motive for resting, a belief in divine authority. Thus the children of the Israelites, (Deut. xxxii. 7.) at the time of entering into the land of promise, might have believed, on human evidence, that the Al-

mighty had spoken to Moses and their fathers from Mount Sinai.—Moreover, as human testimony can certify to us the warlike character and achievements of Julius Cæsar,—and that the religion of ancient Rome was pagan, so human testimony can equally certify to us, that the New Testament was the work of men, who proved themselves to be divinely inspired and supernaturally directed to execute it: consequently that it has a DIVINE AUTHORITY. Which being once admitted, it necessarily follows, that what we believe from scripture, as scripture, is believed ON divine authority. By which it may be seen, that although the creed of the Christian, is in the first instance proposed to him by human authority, his faith is built on the divine authority of the word of God. I have therefore proved to you, my Friends, that the sacred scriptures are an authority, equal to the authority of God himself:—they are that eternal word, which *shall see the heavens and the earth*

pass away,—but itself shall remain:—that eternal word which is the pillar of truth, and, through everlasting ages, shall be the foundation and seat of the Messiah's glory.

To conclude, I have now described in detail and laid open to you the divine foundation of religion: and whether we advert to it, as resting, on the written word of the New Testament,—on the preaching of the Apostles,—on the traditional testimony of Christ's Church,—or the chief corner-stone Jesus Christ,—or whether we consider it as built upon the inspirations of the Prophets, or the Patriarchal communications with the Deity,—we observe, that at every period of its existence, it has been ultimately founded on God himself. He is both the author and the object—the beginning and the end of religion,—which having emanated from the bosom of the eternal Father, at the creation of the world, was fostered in time by the incarnate Son, and will be finally glorified by the Holy Ghost, through everlasting ages.

SERMON VII.

ON CONTROVERSY.

*Let no man deceive you with vain words,
for because of these things cometh the
anger of God upon the children of unbe-
lief.* Ephes. v. 6.

ALTHOUGH I have established in your minds a conviction of the divine character of Jesus Christ and his Gospel, and given you a general notion of the morality of his law, there remains much to be done before I have discharged my duty as a minister of the Christian religion.—I am aware that a great many entertain a different sentiment, and would confine the exertions of any preacher to these two objects; characterizing every other as immaterial and subordinate.—We are Christians, say they, in the proper sense of the word;—that is, our

lives are moral, and our faith, is in Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God. It may be difficult for me immediately to convince these persons of the fallacy of their position ; but there is an argument which should go far towards its refutation ; namely, that it is a sentiment of very modern date, and decidedly at variance with all the learning, virtue and religious institutions of Christendom ;—nay, moreover, a sentiment entertained by those only, who think little of religion and practice less. *Who profess that they know Christ, as the apostle writes, (Tit. i. 16.) but in their works they deny him ; being abominable and incredulous, and to every good work reprobate.* It follows hence, as you perceive, that men are urged to further research by the personal interest they have in the discovery of truth ; and this immediately leads to that species of discussion, called controversy.

Controversy should be confined to a correct statement of the arguments which

are advanced on both sides of a question, in order to come to a true and impartial decision. Notwithstanding therefore the prejudice which is entertained against controversy in all its forms, I do conceive that there is nothing more adapted to a rational soul, nothing more suited to a mind in search of truth. It is this which has formed your heroes in every science, and raised the arts to their present state of improvement. The course is so natural, the proposition so simple, that to question it, would imply a deficiency of understanding. When therefore we consider the particular aversion of men to controversy on religious subjects, we may safely conclude, that their dislike is not absolutely to controversy, but to the truths which controversy might unfold; and which they would be most unwilling to discover;—a conduct which betrays not less a defect of understanding, than corruption of the heart. *For, as Jesus Christ has said, every one that doth evil, hateth the light, and*

cometh not to the light, that his works may not be reprov'd. But he that doth truth, cometh to the light, that his works may be made manifest, because they are done in God. (John iii. 20.) I propose therefore, this day, in the first place, to lay before you reasons which may induce you to take up the study of religion yourselves;—2dly, to point out the dispositions and spirit which should guide you through it.

It is not more certain that the sun enlightens the day, than, that our divine Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, revealed to his apostles and his church, a body of doctrine which was to be the rule of our conduct and the object of our faith in this world, and the foundation of our hopes in the next. A body of doctrine possessing the divine characteristics of uniformity and identity, addressed to and commanded to be received by the whole of the Christian world. *Go*, said Jesus Christ to his apostles, *go preach the gospel to every creature, teaching them to observe all things whatso-*

ever I have commanded you. (Mark xvi. 15. Matt. xxviii. 20.) However, tho' it would amount to blasphemy, to accuse the author of all truth, of revealing a contradiction to men,—or of authorizing as truth in one man, what he prohibited as false in the conscience of another,—we have the evidence of our senses, the testimony of succeeding ages, from the very days of the apostles, to convince us, that in all times there have been men, who led away by the errors of their own judgments, have characterized as revelation, doctrines which were purely human. This is no mere assertion,—it is a fact, which none, I believe, will attempt to deny ; and was never more evident than in the present age. Yet be not astonished, for it is what Jesus Christ himself has prepared you for, in these words ; *Beware of false prophets, who come to you in the cloathing of sheep, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves—take ye heed therefore ; behold I have foretold you all things.* (Matt. vii. 15. Mark xiii. 23.)

And the apostle St. Paul adds, that *the time shall arrive when men shall not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, they will heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and will turn away their hearing from the truth, but will be turned to fables.* (2 Tim. iv. 3, 4.)

Many unacquainted with the religious rule of faith, ascribe this variation of doctrine to some inherent defect in the revealed system of Christianity; and are inclined to believe, that to change, is as essential a property of the law of Christ, as to err, is of the human understanding. But no—the dictates of sense and every notion of a revealed religion forbid such a thought. Can any one imagine, that he who possessed the wisdom requisite to create and organize the universe, and personally took upon himself the instruction of mankind, should prove fallible in that plan of religion which he had designed for us *?—or

* When the Almighty himself became the teacher and instructor of mankind, he neither designed to change our

that what he declared was for ever established upon a rock, should hereafter be found to rest on moveable quick-sands? The Christian religion is the work of God, and far from being inferior, in excellence and perfection surpasses all the other works

nature nor to divest it of its hereditary defects and propensities;—but by his grace to render them instrumental to the acquisition of virtue:—and it is a fact, that according to this wise dispensation of Providence, the pride, passions and crimes of men, as well as the unequal conditions of human life, are all rendered serviceable to our future welfare, and conducive to our eternal crown. In this sense Christ has already reversed the sin of Adam, and *crushed the head of the serpent*. To exemplify this principle—every subdued temptation is a step towards perfection.—The opposition which is experienced in the practice of religion, from the world and the flesh, only makes our fidelity more precious in the sight of God.—Were there no combats, there would be no victories.—Were there no sufferings, injustice and persecution,—the virtues of patience, forgiveness and resignation, could never be practised.—Were all mankind in amity—how could we say that we love our enemies? Were there nothing incomprehensible and mysterious in religion, how could we exercise the virtues of faith, hope, and humility?—Were there no erroneous doctrines, how could the true believer be known and proved. (1 Cor. xi. 19.)

of his hands. It is a system of faith and worship, divinely conceived and supernaturally propagated through the world: and as all means must be proportioned to their ends, it is moreover a system, which destined to last till the end of time, must necessarily stand secure against every species of novelty and error. The defects which these persons think they discover in religion, lie in the medium through which it is viewed and examined by their circumscribed understandings, and judgments:—only half acquainted with its nature, essence and forms, they nevertheless venture to decide upon its merits.

I know there is a latitudinarian principle, * spreading wide among all classes

* In extending the wild schemes of philanthropy and benevolence, which are so hastily embraced at the present day, I have heard some otherwise well informed and sensible Protestants declare, that in their opinions, all religions are equal; and that the Mahometan who lives up to his faith, is entitled to salvation hereafter as well as the Christian. For the truth of this doctrine however, the appeal was not to the verdict of the Eternal, but to Cicero!!!

of Christians, which under the mild name of benevolence and liberality, would assimilate and equalize every sort of doctrine: but however commendable some may conceive that spirit to be, by which it is entertained, the attempt must evidently be condemned, as contradictory to sense and truth. Benevolence I admit is an amiable virtue, a filiation of charity;—but, like liberty, it degenerates, and becomes vitiated, when undirected by some rule, or unrestrained by some law. To pretend to be right, whilst you admit that you are for ever wrong, is an absurdity irreconcilable with common sense. If we profess ourselves members of a revealed religion, we must believe and practise a body of revealed doctrine, that can never alter—never change;—for in whatever instance it varies, whether in points of greater or less consequence, that moment it ceases to be revelation. While therefore, my Brethren, you have the evidence of your senses to assure you, of that multiform doctrine

which pervades the Christian world,—reason and scripture convince you of the obligation you lie under, of discovering by your own efforts, the genuine, revealed doctrine of Jesus Christ.

But, you will ask, how is this to be effected? By following the directions of our blessed Saviour; *seek and you shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you.* Circumstanced as you are, my Brethren, I maintain, that it is the duty of every one who feels any kind of interest in the eternal salvation of his soul, seriously to apply his thoughts to the study of religion, and by perseverance and some little labour satisfy himself, that his faith is the faith of Jesus Christ, and that what he believes and practises is grounded on his sacred and holy word. It but too frequently happens, that Christians imagine they are justified, in adhering to those persuasions in which they have been educated,—or guided by the example of others, and the influence of their own inclinations,

trust their future happiness to chance;—
 alas! nay more; to every chance of
 failure, by practising a religion, which they
 suspect to be untrue.

But, my Brethren, would you act in
 this manner, in any momentous concern
 of life? How then can you venture in an
 affair, where your all for an eternity is at
 stake? Or do you really believe revealed
 truth, to be of that accommodating na-
 ture, that it may be transformed into
 every shape and adapted to every heart?
 and that religion good or bad is to descend
 to posterity by inheritance like a fortune
 or an estate? If it be an undisputed truism
 that two and two makes four, it is not less
 certain, that the revealed doctrine of Jesus
 Christ is one and invariable. If St. Paul
 called down the malediction of heaven on
 any who should dare to innovate the doc-
 trine which he had preached,—if he declared,
 that to resist the truth was a crime of open
 rebellion against God, and in the next life
 would receive the same punishment as ido-

latry, adultery and murder,—what infatuation can so possess your understandings, as quietly to repose in your indifference about the essential truths and mysteries of revelation, and to trust to the most idle, the most deceitful, the most vain of all excuses, **IGNORANCE OF THE LAW?**

Imagine not, my Friends, to shelter yourselves in this manner from the just indignation of your God.—With the same apostle I will tell you, that you shall be judged by your ignorance, and that the same motive which keeps you in your ignorance, shall prove you wilfully guilty of whatever you ought to have known. (Rom. ii. 12.) I am aware, it is frequently said by Christians, who hang this veil of darkness before their eyes, “where little is given, little will be asked;”—“ten talents will not be demanded of him, who has received but two.” True, my Brethren;—but here much is asked, and much must be given. The sower has spread his seed, and what he has sown he has determined to reap. To plead

the excuse just mentioned, is to imitate the folly of him, who shuts his eyes in broad day-light and exclaims, that he cannot see. No ! by every thing that is dear to you, let me persuade you to be no longer deceived by this delusion.—If you love yourselves, your families and friends, apply to the study of religion—learn what Jesus Christ came from heaven to teach you. Open those valuable works, which have been written on the disputed points of Christianity ;—read them with a pious thirst of knowledge ; — compare their authorities and arguments, and employ that reason and understanding, with which God has blessed you. Unless conviction flash truth upon your mind in an affair of this moment, never rest upon the decision of one man,—never trust your eternal salvation to the fair speeches of any individual preacher*. Our blessed Saviour tells you,

* In the peculiar circumstances of religion in this country, it is absolutely necessary that the sincere and earnest Christian recur to purer sources of information, in order to try every point by the weight of *argument, proof and sound sense.*

that ravenous wolves shall come in the disguise of sheep;—therefore, as Christians, apply to the study of the Christian doctrine: and let me tell you, that as it is a science, which is to be preached to every creature, so it is easily attained by such as have the will and inclination to discover it. Would the Mannings, the Bossuets, the Challoners, the Hays, have devoted their labours to controversy and the exposition of sacred doctrine, had not a love of truth, and a watchfulness for the salvation of others, called them forth the champions of the Catholic faith, and the luminaries of the Christian world?* Oh! let me advise you then, my Brethren, to read their learned and pious labours,—let them stand foremost in the Christian's library, and replace the trash of novels and ro-

* In directing my observation to controversial writers, I should certainly particularize a recent work, entitled *Sermons on various religious and moral Subjects, for all the Sundays after Pentecost*. It would be difficult to bestow too much praise on this truly elegant, orthodox and instructive performance.

mances. Their simplicity and perspicuity will charm you, their piety will edify, and while the Catholic will become solidly instructed in the fundamental articles of his religion, others may discover the motives which retain us in the faith of our forefathers. And thus as St. Peter writes, *You will be always ready to satisfy every one that asketh you a reason of that hope which is in you.* (1 Pet. iii. 15.)

But you will perhaps object, that controversy has been made the channel of rancour, while the cause of truth has often been sacrificed to the heat and violence of party.—This, my Brethren, I will not attempt to deny.—It only shews that no station of life will exempt a man from the failings and weakness of his nature, and that the influence of passion and interest may be extended from temporal concerns to those of religion. If any inference, however, can be drawn from these facts, far from being prejudicial, it must be wholly in favour of what I am endeavour-

ing to prove ;—I mean that the high importance of your eternal interests calls upon every one of you to examine the foundation of his faith, and with the rectitude of an upright heart, and the justness of an unbiassed judgment, to ascertain the sterling weight of those authorities in which he confides.—Do not however mistake me—it is not my wish that you should become controvertists, or enter the ranks of theological disputants. —The Almighty has not allotted to you that sphere :—but in the command which he has given to us, to preach his doctrine to every creature, a second is included, whereby he obliges you to study it, and to employ the necessary and effective means to learn it.

Place yourselves then in the situation of the princes of the earth, who while they commit to their stewards the labour and superintendence of their concerns, reserve to themselves the right of balancing their accounts.—In assenting to the points of revealed doctrine, let nothing pass, which

will not square with the word of God,—which does not rest upon the authority of ages, and has not conviction to mark it with the seal of truth. Remember, if Jesus Christ declares, *that he will reap where he has not sown, and gather where he has not strewed*, (Mark xxv. 26)—that is, if infidels and savages shall be judged for their ignorance of the law,—most unmercifully rigid will that judgment be, which shall be passed upon you, my Brethren, who live in an age enlightened by education, and in a country possessed of every avenue that can lead to knowledge. Yet shall we say, that many are learned in the science of salvation?—Would to God! that the heavens could not attest the truth of my words:—but in the midst of that bright light, which education and philosophical studies diffuse, I must assert, that revelation is little known and little understood;—and whilst the minds of men are directed to the most insignificant discoveries, the divine science taught by a God made

man, is neglected and despised, as unworthy the attention of the human mind. How well observes the pious author of the *Following of Christ*, “truly better is the condition of the humble clown, who serves his God, than that of the proud philosopher, who neglecting himself, studies the course of the heavens!” and hence our blessed Saviour exclaims; *I praise thee, oh! Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast concealed these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them to little ones.* (Matt. xi. 25.)

There are three qualifications which every one should possess, who enters on the study of controversy: first, an invincible love of truth; — a love that can rise above the prejudices of education, the influence of friends and the fear of enemies; — a love stronger than death, and which can only rest in the fruition of its object. *The kingdom of heaven, says Jesus Christ, is like to a merchant seeking good pearls. Who when he had found one pearl of great price, went his*

way, and sold all that he had, and bought it.

(Matt. xiii. 45.) To that sincere soul whose only desire is to serve her God, *in spirit and in truth*, the knowledge of his law becomes the first object of her wishes, the subject of her joy, and while she pursues it with a zeal, that no difficulties can check, she is wholly indifferent to the means, by which it is attained. Imitate, my Brethren, the wise policy of those who really wish to become learned: — seeking information wherever it may be found, contend, only that you may yield to him who is best instructed, and cultivate the society of those, whose wisdom and whose virtue you esteem.

It often happens that persons in reading controversial writings, seek not so much the discovery of truth, as the relief of an anxious conscience, and, the justification of themselves, in adhering to what better suits the inclinations of their hearts. But what end can such Christians propose to themselves in this conduct?—

Surely if there ever be a moment when man should exhibit the simplicity and candour of an honest mind, it should be when he deals with his Creator, and when he himself is deciding on the salvation of his soul. Could these persons look their God in the face, and exclaim, "I have sought thee, I have found thee, oh eternal truth!" my Brethren, their consciences would convict them of falsehood.

In showing, however, how essential a love of truth is to the discovery of revealed religion, we must here object against the practice of many, who while they approve and conform to some particular mode of doctrine, reserve for a later day, that examination of its several points, which according to strict sense should have preceded their decision. This is undoubtedly a reversion of order;—and if every one would censure it in a court of justice,—why not in the supreme court of conscience and in the presence of an Almighty Judge? Until you have examined, therefore, wisely sus-

pend all decisions: for by no other means can you escape error and deception,—by no other course is it likely that the grace of God will lead you to the light of truth.

The next essential qualification in the study of controversy, is humility of heart. If ever, my Brethren, our vanity permit us to believe, that we have gained a sufficiency of knowledge, that moment there must be an end to all improvement, and we at once become stationary. Now if such be the effect in any profane science, how much more powerfully will it influence us in the acquisition of revealed knowledge, so evidently above the strength of our own natural perceptions. If depending only upon your own talents and abilities, you proceed then to the study of the divine law, you attempt what is manifestly impossible;—while the learning of the most able divines would but serve to bewilder you with still greater perplexities:—because, with all your proficiency in the

wisdom of the world, you would not know that you were ignorant of the humility of the Gospel.

Faith, my Brethren, is a gift of God, which can never be derived from any other source;—and it is on the humble alone that he bestows it. You may sooner expect to meet with ice in fire, than faith in a proud man. *I thank thee, oh Father, that thou hast concealed these things from the wise and prudent.* (Matt. xi. 25.) Indeed, my Friends, have we not seen those, whom learning and sense, according to the natural course of things, should have conducted to truth, run wild into every extravagance of thought and opinion, while the humble and illiterate were brought, by the secret ways of God, to a full and complete acquaintance with revelation.—*A contrite and humble heart, oh God, thou wilt not despise.* (Ps. 50.)

I come now to the last qualification for controversy, and that is charity.*—In the

* *Fortiter in re, suaviter in modo*, should be the golden motto of every controvertist.

variety of intercourse we have with our neighbour, you will allow, my Brethren, that this virtue is never more necessary, than when we have to encounter on one hand the weakness of nature, and on the other the violence of passions;—and particularly where our object is to harmonize, reconcile and unite the divided flock of Jesus Christ. As you must generally be contending with persons, professing a different faith and religion, whom interest may render positive, and difficulties fill with reluctance, I have to advise you in the first place, never to forget, that however opposite their sentiments and tenets may be to your own, these persons are still the images of God,—pledges of his love and redeemed by the blood of Christ;—consequently claiming every token of an unprejudiced charity.

It is here, my Brethren, that I must particularly recommend you to take for your model the example of our divine Master.—In all zeal for the glory of God and

the salvation of souls,—in all patience and forbearance, he discoursed of the kingdom of heaven with the greatest sinners; and refused not to instruct even the artful and designing Pharisees. Privileged as you are, my Friends, beyond the rest of mankind, by a plenitude of graces, show your gratitude to God, by thus contributing to the salvation of your neighbour.—Enforce the truth according to the advice of the apostle; *be instant in season, out of season, reprove, intreat, rebuke with all patience and doctrine.* (2 Tim. iv. 2.) If he unfold to you the secrets of his heart, abuse not his confidence;—if with contempt he reject your advice, be willing to believe him conscious of the rectitude of his own actions, and let charity and humility still distinguish you as the disciples of Jesus Christ.

Persons are frequently deterred from religious inquiry by that intemperance and warmth, which so commonly enter into discussions of this nature. Let me persuade you then, to avoid what must rather

tend to betray than promote the cause of virtue and religion :—attentively hear every objection and argument that can be brought against your doctrine, and with all mildness and patience, vindicate and maintain the faith of Jesus Christ. Yet charity requires not that you disguise the *truth* ; even if the question be respecting eternal salvation, with candour answer like our blessed Saviour, who asked by the Samaritan woman, as to the truth of the Jewish or Samaritan religions, replied, *Salvation is of the Jews.* (John iv. 22.)

And here, my Brethren, I wish to be perfectly understood :—tho' charity must guide us in every thought,—tho' charity must qualify every argument, I do not mean that it should ever be to the prejudice of TRUTH ; since TRUTH is paramount to every other consideration. By what appellation would you denote the kindness of that physician, who allowed his patient and friend to perish, because he could not prevail upon himself to inform him of his

danger. You may call this tenderness,—I call it cruelty. You may name it an honourable delicacy,—I, a base hypocrisy,—a prostitution of the name of friendship. I then, my Brethren, protest against every species of charity, but that which carries with it an honest and candid countenance; no other is recognized in the Gospel, and no other can I tolerate. I will love my neighbour as myself,—I will divide my loaf with my greatest enemy; but truth I will compromise with none; nor shall my tongue ever speak a sentiment which is not already engraved at the bottom of my heart.*

I have now, my Friends, as well as I have been able, pointed out to you motives

* "That spurious liberality," writes a Protestant Divine, "which is indifferent to truth and error,—that pretended candour which aims to extinguish our zeal and to blind our judgment,—in vain obtrudes upon us, under the name of *christian charity*. It is not the thing it pretends to be. It is not consistent with it: for it obstructs that greatest effort of charity—seasonable reproof and evangelical admonition." *Davies's Church Union*, page 217.

which should induce you, to take up the study of religion. I have moreover established it as an obligation, for such as are not fully instructed and certified of the truth of what they profess. With this view I have recommended to you, the reading of controversial books, or any others which may convey to your minds, that information you want; and remember it is our duty, to afford every assistance in our power. In what I have said, I have addressed myself to the Protestant, as well as to the Catholic. And why should I not? For wishing to be united to every Christian, by the ties of a real charity and love, neither sect nor name, shall ever exclude any from my friendship and affection. In the very centre of my bosom have I deposited the wants and necessities of all; and may time never erase these sentiments from my breast.—Nor let any say, that I wish to enveigle:—no! every act, which their consciences censure and forbid, I would be the first to oppose,—the

first to condemn. It is for the sake of truth, and truth alone, that I have raised my voice this day, and for their eternal happiness have I exerted myself in its cause. To facilitate and ensure their passage to endless bliss, is the grand object of my wishes; and that we may all meet and rejoice together in the happy day of eternity, the study of my thoughts.



SERMON VIII.

ON THE WORD OF GOD.

*The word which you have heard is not mine,
but the Father's who sent me. John xiv. 24.*

THERE is nothing of more importance to Christians, than a right comprehension of what the WORD OF GOD really implies. Qualified by the Psalmist, *a lamp to our feet, a light to our paths*, (Ps. cxviii. 105.) it is the seed of all good works,—the root of every virtue,—the light of the understanding,—the basis and essence of the religion of Jesus Christ; and as such undoubtedly claims our most earnest attention. I am willing to grant that if we regard as the word of God, the mass of that doctrine which is weekly announced from many pulpits of this kingdom, never did there exist a period, since the first conversion of these realms to Christianity, in

which the nation was more liberally supplied with this spiritual bread of life. It seems to descend like the evening dew, and to rest upon the spirit of every one, that has the courage to ascend the ministerial chair.—Nor is it with less astonishment that I often contemplate the crowded ranks, returning from our churches and chapels of every description and name.—All pass contentedly home, edified with their instructor, and most of them persuaded that they have been feeding on the bread of life, the word of God. Difference of kind, opposition of quality never startle them as a difficulty. But is the word of God then so variable and inconstant? or is language to be so denominated merely because it proceeds from a pulpit?—Surely it must be known by some other signs;—and what characteristic will you sooner expect, than that of being always ONE AND THE SAME, like the Eternal himself. If Jesus Christ has told you, *By their fruits ye shall know them*, (Matt. vii. 16.)—

can contradiction be a sign of truth? Thus then, viewing the question before us, there is no alternative than to admit, either that the word of God is often in opposition with itself, which would be a blasphemous sentiment,—or that men are often deceived in supposing, that the word of God has been preached to them.—On this I will leave you to decide, whilst, in the first place, I explain its real nature,—and 2dly, offer some lights, which may be useful to those who are sincerely in search of it.

The *word of God*, may be properly divided into that which human reason can understand, and that which the understanding cannot fathom;—that is, into plain morality and sublime mystery. The one consistently styled by divines, moral doctrine, comprehends our moral duties and social relations between man and man. (*Rom. ii. 14.*) The other, termed dogmatical, consists entirely of revealed and impenetrable mystery, scarce admits of examination or discussion, and is solely to be

believed on account of the authority that proposes it. The two constitute what is denominated the divine law of Christ, or the Gospel.—With this definition before us, as no preacher can have discharged his duty, if he has not instructed his flock in each, so no Christian can be said to have learnt his religion, if he is not well acquainted with both.

The moral is the simple law of nature, engraven in every man's heart, at his creation, and set forth by the example and instructions of Jesus Christ, in the most perfect form. (*Rom. ii. 15.*)—The elements or principles exist in the breast of the savage, as well as in the member of civilized society,—in the Pagan as well as the Christian, and may be brought into action, by the mere exercise of reason. I mean, none require, either scripture, revelation, or preachers, to be convinced “that they are to do as they would be done by.” For to be told, that they are not to “pilfer an other man's property,—not to injure their neighbour's person and character,

—not to commit adultery, — not to blaspheme nor indulge intemperance, (*Rom.* xiii. 8. 9, 10, 11, &c.) is to hear, what was written in the heart of man, at the time God breathed into his face the breath of life. Moreover, no parent can require either preacher or scripture to teach him, that he is to check the vicious inclinations of his offspring, and to remind him, that a judge above will weigh every action in the scales of eternal justice.—He cannot want a monitor to tell him, that he is to shew pity to his own flesh, in his distressed and supplicating neighbour. It may be useful to call his attention to the urgent motives for charity, but he may learn the principles of this duty from the untaught and compassionating infant.

Truly different however is the case when we come to speak of dogmatical and supernatural doctrine, which is derived from the immediate revelations of God. If moral truths and instructions be of that order of things, which are perfectly within our own sphere, or the compass of human reason,

the circumstances are totally reversed, when our attention is directed from natural to supernatural objects. It is to pass in thought to the regions of eternity, whilst we remain the mortal inhabitants of this earth,—and to draw knowledge from the same source as the angels and cherubim. It is to learn what, as St. Paul tells us, *the eye hath not seen, nor the ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived* (1 Cor. ii. 9.) :—that is *the substance of things to be hoped for, the evidence of things that appear not* : (Heb. xi. 1.) — it is, in short, to know the things which it is above the powers of human reason to judge of.

This forms the substance of that revelation, which the eternal Son of God descended from heaven to teach :—this is the important object of the Christian's faith, and what the apostles were specially commanded to preach to every creature throughout the world. The understanding therefore can proceed but a little way in this sublime course ; the preacher

himself feels that he is below the subject, and can only unfold it to others, as it has been communicated to him. Hence, as I have said, it is styled dogmatical, because by its nature it nearly excludes examination and discussion. Indeed the province of the understanding is to weigh the credibility of the instrument that announces a point of doctrine:—but on the doctrine itself, it must pass an unqualified sentence of admission or rejection—of faith or disbelief. In order to be more distinctly understood, I will instance the sacrament of Baptism;—a ceremony I select in preference, because admitted by all Christians;—a ceremony completely mysterious, producing in the soul a most wonderful effect, though entirely concealed from the senses: we may attempt an explanation; but however active the imagination may be, in forming conceptions, and fancying new discoveries, the understanding will remain enveloped and overwhelmed with the Majesty of Infinity.

I will therefore leave it to your prudent reflection to say, if men are not often deceived in supposing that the WORD OF GOD has been preached to them:—I mean in supposing that the word of God is announced to them, as Jesus Christ desired his apostles, *to go and teach all nations all things whatsoever he had commanded them.* (Matt. xxviii. 20.) I will not pretend to deny but there may be something of the word of God, either moral or dogmatical, in every discourse delivered from a Christian pulpit:—but I am prepared to assert, that the instructors of our Protestant Brethren almost wholly confine themselves to the former, whilst the other, which is more essentially the word of God, because essentially the revealed word, they seldom or never unfold to the people. You may have heard Protestant preachers very properly define the sad consequences of intemperance, as also the blasphemous impiety of habitual swearing;—you may have been edified when you have seen them set forth

with zeal the duties of society, and the happiness to be found in acts of benevolence ;—this, no doubt, is instructive, excellent and proper ; but is far from being all the Christian is bound to know—it is not even the half.—There yet remains the whole of that more sublime law of grace and salvation, which Jesus Christ descended from heaven, especially to reveal to men, and which embraces the grander objects of our faith, or those mysteries and sacraments which conduct us to sanctity and qualify us for the glory of eternity. Indeed, most modern Protestant preachers professedly exclude divinity from their discourses, and you may frequently listen to an individual for a twelvemonth, without ever discovering whether his faith should be characterized Catholic or Protestant*.

* The preachers of this country may be divided into four classes of orators, widely differing in their style of pulpit eloquence. The first class belongs to the established church, and are those who confine themselves to dry

How important, however, does this subject become, when we reflect that the

reasoning on some moral subjects. These seldom attempt more than logically to prove what every one admits:—they employ themselves in deducing consequences from received principles—show that moral precepts are founded in truth—and expatiate on the practicability of virtue, and the reasonableness of religion. As these discourses no way interest the affections of the soul, the congregations usually assist at them in a distracted or torpid state of mind, and the preacher descends from his pulpit with the conviction, that he has reasoned well, and proved his point.

This class of preachers was formerly very numerous in the established church; but latterly has been supplanted, in the opinion of many in the community, by another description of sacred orators—who adhere, indeed, to the same subjects, but dress their sermons out in all the charms of the florid style. These play upon the imagination with the tinsel of figure and metaphor—tickle the ear with the melody of sound—and their language glows with the fervent effusions of poetry. This species of preaching, styled *Gentlemanly language*, pleases the meretricious taste of the age; and such preachers, usually considered the most eloquent and perfect by those, who are not acquainted with the judgment of the apostle, (*Gal. i. 10.*) are followed by the voluptuous, the giddy and the great. Between these preachers and the public there seems to exist a tacit agreement that *hell* and *damnation* shall never be mentioned; nor their modest ears offended by the sins of the flesh, *which are*

greatest curse, which the Almighty can inflict on any people, is to withdraw the

fornication, uncleanness, immodesty, luxury, &c. the doers of which, however, the same apostle tells us, shall *not obtain the kingdom of God.* (Gal. iv. 19.) As in such congregations moral improvement is neither sought nor attained, the service might be called the Sunday-farce.

The third class are those who fill the pulpits of the Methodists and the various sects of dissenters; the Independents, Anabaptists, Quakers, &c. Their sermons are in general unintelligible. But by the means of affected piety, a pharisaical rigour, and the use of certain cant expressions, they are followed by multitudes. Though much given to the discussion of sublime and mysterious points of faith, these preachers always do it in such obscure and indefinite language, that whilst to the informed it conveys nothing intelligible, it is easily adapted by the people to any notions, they may entertain on the subject. At other times they deal largely in spiritual axioms;—such as, “happy is the Christian in whose soul Jesus Christ doth dwell”—“the grace of righteousness is more valuable than kingdoms”—“he who possesseth God, walketh in the liberty of the Gospel”—“to have experience of Christ, we must be convinced of sin,” &c.

The fourth class are preachers, who first instructing by example, address the hearts as well as the understandings of their hearers, with a bold and manly eloquence, peculiar to themselves, and worthy the Gospel they preach. In a lively and animated style these depict all the truths of

lights of instruction—to abandon them to the desires of their own hearts, and leave them a prey to falsehood and deception. With this species of vengeance God often chastized the unfaithful Jews.—In punishment of their impieties, he imposed silence on his prophets, and in their place permitted innumerable seducers to rise up, to delude and mislead the multitude; so that, as we learn from the third book of Kings, no less than four hundred false prophets, were assembled, at one time, in the single kingdom of Israel. Yes! I repeat, this is the severest curse with which

religion, communicate to their audience a real interest in the discourse, and clothe it in the unctious and apostolic language of warm and solid piety. No ways averse to the embellishments of eloquence, they refuse however to be the servile slaves of fashion;—and though they endeavour to win the heart, their first object is to instruct the mind. Bold, but steady to truth;—alarming to the sinner, but always consoling to the penitent;—sublime yet clear, they announce the whole Gospel, without respect to persons or conditions:—and as long as these retain this pure style of oratory, so long will their discourses continue to produce the intended effect.

the Almighty visits the crimes of any people ; — more mercifully does he pursue them with pestilence, fire and sword :— and yet on how many millions of our fellow subjects, does the divine justice thus secretly revenge itself ? They think that they have the light of the Gospel within them, but as our Saviour expresses it, *the light within them is darkness*, (Luke xi. 35.) and for an eternity will they be the willing but unhappy victims of their delusion : *according to their own desires*, writes the apostle, *they heap to themselves teachers*. (2 Tim. iv. 3.)

In fact, I think it impossible to condemn too strongly the inconsiderate folly of our countrymen, who are in the habit of attending different descriptions of preachers, believing that all announce the word of God. How many Christians, for instance, after expressing themselves pleased and edified, with what they have one Sunday heard from the Protestant Bishop of London, will listen, with equal satisfaction the following

week, to a Catholic preacher! But does not common sense suggest to them, that one of the two must necessarily be an emissary of the spirit of darkness,—a disciple of the father of lies,—an advocate of error? Have they forgotten the warning of Jesus Christ,—*beware of false prophets, who come to you in the clothing of sheep; but inwardly they are ravenous wolves?* (Matt. vii. 15.)

Notwithstanding, therefore, the incessant re-echo of these expressions, Gospel, Scripture, and Word of God,—notwithstanding those innumerable sermons and exhortations, which are weekly preached to multitudes, I am free to declare, the word of God is so little known, that there is nothing, of which every rank and class are more completely ignorant. Indeed, it seems the community have lost sight of its very nature :—for, instead of considering it in that sublime point of view, in which it must always stand as a heavenly annunciation, to judge by observation, they re-

duce it to the mere human forms of oratory and persuasion *. What fine reasoning, exclaims one, on hearing an admired preacher! How well he speaks, adds a second. If then the same person were, with equal ability, to discuss a subject of philosophy or politics, and you should address him in the same complimentary language, by what criterion are we to know, that you view the one only as doctrine which has penetrated the clouds ;—as a science which has descended from the eternal mansions ;—as knowledge which has

* The view which Protestants take of religion, is exactly that which they take of the fashions and politics of the day.—They chuse amongst religions as they chuse a dish of meat at an entertainment ;—or as a woman purchases a dress, for no other reason, than because she takes a liking to it. They wear religion just as their servants do liveries ;—and if any difficulty is started—their answer is, that “ they have no notion of putting themselves out of the way.” — “ Man is placed in this world, and his first concern should be to get through it happily.”—What a comment on the words of Christ—*What will it avail a man to gain the whole world, should he come at last to lose his soul !*

been sent to men by the Most High? My Brethren it is not in our power to distinguish for you, since you yourselves do away every mean of distinction.—For by setting aside those motives of credibility given you by Jesus Christ, and grounding, as you do, your assent on the concurrence of the understanding, divine faith is at an end ;—and your belief a mere dependent of human reason. No wonder then that it should so often change with its principle !—What claim can it have to stability ?

But here, perhaps, you will ask, are we then totally to set reason aside, in order to guide ourselves by a blind determination ?—By no means, my Brethren.—Reason must be the spring of every moral act and thought: but let it be a well governed reason, and limited to its proper objects. Follow the advice of Solomon, *Seek not the things that are too high for thee, and search not into the things above thy ability: but the things which God hath commanded*

thee, think on them always, and in many of his works be not curious. For it is not necessary for thee to see with thy eyes those things that are hid. In unnecessary matters be not over curious, and in many of his works, thou shalt not be inquisitive. For many things are shewn to thee, above the understanding of men. And the suspicion of them hath deceived many, and hath detained their minds in vanity. (Ecclesiastic. iii. 22, 23, 24, 25, 26.) Let the inquisitorial faculties of reason, then, be employed to investigate the motives of credibility, and the sources of authority;—but let them not, as I have already said, attempt what is beyond their reach, and hidden in the impenetrable knowledge of God. To explain myself more fully, I suppose that every Christian enters into a church or chapel with the conviction, that Jesus Christ revealed the Christian religion, and empowered men to preach it;—therefore, on hearing doctrine announced in the name of Jesus Christ, your

attention should not, at first, be so much engrossed with the nature of the doctrine, as occupied with the character and authority of the preacher:—because revelation carries with it the idea of something above the understanding, and few only are competent to be judges of doctrine. Yet, morally speaking, all are competent to examine, whether the preacher has any right to teach in the name of Jesus Christ, (John xiii. 1.) for on that, and that alone, his claim to your faith must properly rest:—which, as I have said in matters so exalted, no strength of reasoning, no eloquence can command. For example, could all the reasoning in the world, ever demonstrate to the understanding, that men are spiritually regenerated by baptism? No! nothing but the assurance, that such has been the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Therefore, in order to ascertain, on all occasions, what is, and what is not the word of God, — there exists no surer and more easy rule, than, in the first

instance, for you, attentively to consider the source from whence the preacher derives his authority, to claim your attention. This conduct you even observe in all civil concerns. Suppose, for instance, a magistrate were to call upon you, for your personal services in war, or any pecuniary contingent to the state, would it not be your first and most proper question, by whom, Sir, are you empowered to make such demand? And in default of being able to establish his authority, by tracing it up to him, in whom the supreme power of government resides, you would conceive yourselves justified in resisting a demand, thus wantonly made upon your persons and property. My Friends, the principle of your conduct should be the same, in listening to the word of God ;—which, to wear the stamp of orthodoxy, must be preached, till the end of the world, by the delegated ministers of Christ. *How can they preach*, writes St. Paul, *unless they be sent*. (Rom. x. 15.)—Even if one come

in the form of an angel, *let him be anathema*. (Gal. i. 8.) To exhort our neighbour to virtue, to lead him from the paths of vice, is the charitable duty of every good Christian; but to unfold the doctrine of revelation, is the office of men only, who chosen and delegated by heaven for that purpose, and proceeding in the direct line of succession from the apostles, inherit this divine commission *of preaching the Gospel to every creature*, (Mark xvi. 15.) with the promise of all necessary assistance till the end of time. (Matt. xxviii. 19.)

Presenting myself to you, therefore, as a consecrated preacher of the word of God, I court the application of those tests ordained by Jesus Christ, and also advise you, to try by the same proofs, every other, who presumes to discharge the duties of this privileged character. For your better instruction, I will repeat them.—To belong to that lineal and uninterrupted succession of pastors, from the

apostles of Christ, to which I alluded, our ministry must be approved and recognized as such by the Catholic Church. Now our pedigree is easily traced:—one remove from the bishops of the church, we visibly and immediately mount through them by a direct line to the apostles; which, like a chain, connects us with Jesus Christ,—and transmits to us that same authority with which he invested them. *As my Father hath sent me, said he, so I send you, (John xx. 21.)—even to the consummation of the world. (Matt. xxiii. 20.)* In extending, however, as I advise you, the application of this rule, to preachers of other denominations, you will find it impossible to trace their authority, and by consequence, the doctrine they teach, as far back as the apostles. You will never fail to come to the last link, which broke away from the great chain of orthodoxy, and left the succeeding joints completely cut off and isolated from all divine authority. Can we wonder then, that the word

of God should not be preached by men, who have never received a divine commission to that effect? Can we feel astonished that such persons should for ever be contending about what is, or what is not the word of God,—*and tost to and fro by every wind of doctrine?* (Ephes. iv. 14.) — *By their fruits ye shall know them.* (Matt. vii. 16.)

How different is it among those who really preach the word of God! Attend to the numerous Catholic preachers of this great metropolis—listen to those, who are employed in instructing congregations in the several parts of this country—visit the numerous and populous parishes of Ireland—thence pass to other nations of the Catholic world,—you will hear them all announcing one and the self-same doctrine as to every article of revealed faith, and morals; the sublimity of which, I have told you, the understanding cannot even fathom. Now, therefore, say if it can issue from any other source than the

fountain of truth — God himself. *The word which you have heard, is not our's, but the Father's who sent us.* (John xiv. 24.)

If there be any who object to this proof as unsatisfactory, and demand a stronger motive, to induce them to receive my doctrine, as the word of God, I reply, my Brethren, without deciding whether it be possible or not to have a stronger motive, that there cannot exist a doubt of the adequateness of the one in question. It is sufficient for me and for millions, and why not also for you. While others profess the humility of little children, why will you be puffed up *with the wisdom of the world ?—The foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men.* (1 Cor. i. 20, 25.) If in answer, you say, we believe and we know that you are of the mother church, and come in a direct line of succession from the apostles, — yet we cannot consent to receive your doctrine as the word of God, I insist, my Brethren,

that you are not aware, that by this conduct, you transfer to yourselves the whole of that responsibility which attaches to your pastors:—and why unnecessarily consent to carry a burden, which God had exclusively laid on their shoulders? If you erred before, the sin was theirs:—and why make it your own? Only called upon to follow, *who hears you hears me*, said Jesus Christ, the justice of heaven would not condemn your involuntary error of obedience. Whereas if you undertake to judge for your pastors, you obviously resist the messengers of Christ,—and if wrongly,—and God is my witness, that you would do it wrongly, what a weight of responsibility would you carry to the judgment-seat of Jesus Christ? Were a Commander-in-chief to send his Adjutant to an inferior officer, positively commanding him to execute a particular service, would it be proper in that subaltern to hesitate? Would it become him to say, it is better to halt than to march? His duty is submission; and

whatever the event, in his obedience he will have acted a deserving and honourable part, whereas by disobedience, even if his exertions be crowned with success, he may have rendered himself worthy of death. Still, this latter authority is fallible,—whereas that of God is infallible.

My Friends, prescinding from the command of Jesus Christ, you must be sensible, that it is totally immaterial to us, whether we announce to you seven sacraments or but three,—whether Jesus Christ, communicate to you his grace, in one way, or another. In this country we can have no object in telling you, that the Church of Christ is *one*, and different from the *one* by law established;—we can have no worldly motive in asserting, that the Mass is a true and real sacrifice of the body and blood of Christ, and that penance is a sacramental tribunal in which the sins of the repentant are forgiven;—I will not so much as mention those baser intentions, which some have attempted to fix to our

ministry ; — we have none, — we can have none in the mind of a reasonable man, but that of duty.—On that alone will I consent to rest my conduct, as an instructor, as well as that of my Catholic fellow labourers in the vineyard. *The word which you have heard is not mine, but the Father's who sent me.* (John xiv. 24.)

Yet, my Brethren, although I am confident that you cannot reasonably attach to us an improper motive, are you equally certain that you are disinterested yourselves in resisting our doctrine ? Much of it, I am ready to grant, is ungrateful to the will, and hard to the understanding :—and is not this the ground on which you establish your opposition ? I fear that it is ;—nevertheless observe, that neither the difficulties of the understanding, nor the objections of the will, can justify you in resisting our doctrine. — Having authority from God, as you acknowledge, to preach a revealed religion to a sinful world, we are supposed to announce truths

hard to be understood and unpleasant to the feelings of human nature. *If any one will come after me*, said Jesus, *let him deny himself*. (Matt. xvi. 32.)—And St. Paul informs us, *that faith is the substance of things to be hoped for, the evidence of things that appear not*. (Heb. xi. 1.) You must allow then, that in the sight of God and conscience, the voice of our ministry is a sufficient motive for you to submit to our doctrine ; where nothing appears prejudicial to the established laws of morality. I will now however proceed a step farther, and show, that if this were not a sufficient motive of credibility, no other would succeed. The truth of which assertion, I ground on the authority of former precedents.

Miracles present the most powerful and convincing testimony that can be offered, by any preacher, as evidence of his mission and doctrine : yet when Jesus Christ wrought the most stupendous signs for the conviction of the stubborn Jews, did

they not tell him, that he worked them in the power of Belzebub. The apostles astonished all Jerusalem by the miraculous proofs they gave of their mission and doctrine ; but Jerusalem remained unconverted :—and when Peter and John cured the man who had been a cripple from his birth, did not the priests and elders immediately assemble, and confer among themselves, saying, *What shall we do to these men ? for indeed a known miracle hath been done by them, to all the inhabitants of Jerusalem : it is manifest, and we cannot deny it.* (Acts iv. 16.) What shall we do, they ask ? — A strange question you will allow, my Brethren. — If convinced of the miracle, go, you would answer, go, throw yourselves at the feet of those whom you have so unjustly persecuted, go, embrace that doctrine, you have hitherto resisted, with so much obstinacy,—but which you have now seen supernaturally confirmed. No ! this was not their decision. But calling *Peter and John they threatened them, and charged*

them not to speak at all, nor teach in the name of Jesus. (Acts iv. 18.)

In further proof of this assertion, have we not seen the Israelites, in the face of the most stupendous miracles, openly throw off their obedience to God? and at the moment when their very existence for a day, depended on the providence of heaven miraculously exercised in their behalf, did they not thrust from them their deliverer from the land of Egypt, and become the worshippers of a golden calf? *The Jews ask for signs, and the Greeks seek after wisdom, says the apostle, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling-block to the Jews, and folly to the Gentiles. (1 Cor. i. 22, 23.)*

The Jews, as I have shewn, like Herod, might be eager to witness a miracle, but their hearts were insensible to any impression it could make.—A crucified Messiah, and the penitential road of the cross, were obstacles which no miracle could overcome; and not less inadequate would miracles prove to convince the understanding, and change

the hearts of those Christians, to whom the word of God is now preached without effect. *If they believe not Moses and the prophets, says the Almighty, neither will they believe if one rise from the dead.* (Luke xvi 31.) Call not upon us, then, for miracles to confirm our mission.—No! accuse your corrupted hearts,—your understandings darkened by sin and passion, which resist the standing miracle of *succession* and render your minds impervious to the light of grace and instruction.—The Gospel, which at no time is concealed, blazes forth like the sun, shedding its divine beams on all who wish to be enlightened,—for *the sensual man*, writes the apostle, *perceiveth not those things, that are of the spirit of God: for it is foolishness to him, and he cannot understand.* (1 Cor. ii. 14.)

Trusting, then, you are convinced, that to us the Almighty has given the sublime commission of publishing the doctrine he has revealed, it only remains for me to challenge your docility. — True, he has

selected brittle vessels, but this manifests *the power of God*, in a stronger light;—for whether the word of God be announced by a prophet animated with the divine spirit, and declaring it as the immediate messenger of the Most High, or whether it be unfolded to you by us his humble and ordinary ministers, it is still the same. (Matt. xxiii. 2.)—In either case you must receive it as such, since Jesus Christ has said, *who hears you, hears me ; who despises you, despises me*. It pleased our blessed Saviour, by preaching to lay the first foundation of his Church,—by the same means did he command his apostles to extend it to the four corners of the earth, and in no other manner has he directed the edifice to be supported, till the consummation of time. *For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty in God, — for the bringing into captivity every un-*

derstanding unto the obedience of Christ.
(2 Cor. x. 3, 4, 5.)

Charged with the execution of a commission, then, not less important to the human race, than exalted in its own nature, we, indeed, reveal to you the mysteries of our faith, and the doctrine of our holy religion,—but unchanged and pure as they have descended to us. — For great as the prerogatives may be with which our Saviour has invested his ministers, still to them has never been granted the privilege of smoothing or widening the road to eternal bliss. (*Matt. vii. 14.*) In the attempt we should betray the folly of those, who, as St. Peter says, *wrest the scriptures to their own destruction.* (2 Peter iii. 16.) Protected by the promises of the Holy Ghost, and secured by principles so wise and salutary, — that doctrine which originally came from heaven, and was miraculously disseminated through the world by the apostles and their successors in the

Catholic Church—has, through the long period of eighteen centuries, reached the present generation, and by the same channel which conveyed it to us, will it continue to flow pure and unchanged till the dissolution of the world. (*Matt. xxviii. 20.*)



SERMON IX.

ON THE CHOICE OF RELIGION.

Take heed therefore that the light within thee be not darkness. Luke xi. 35.

THERE is a certain innate principle in man called conscience, which is an interior light, or the reaction of the soul within herself. Distinct from the light of faith and instruction, it is so essential to us as rational beings, that we cannot forfeit conscience, unless we also forfeit reason. Associated to us in life, it must live with us through eternity;—and in the mansions of the blessed, or under the torments of hell, will prove that principle which most assimilates us to the Supreme Being, to *whose image* we were created. (*Gen. i. 27.*)

This conscience, my Friends, has been given to us by God, for the wisest inten-

tions.—As the rule of our conduct and the witness of our actions, it is to urge us to virtue, and to be an impartial judge.—In fine, as no moral action can begin or terminate without conscience, — be assured of these general maxims: whenever conscience does not exactly square with any practice civil or religious—whenever conscience refuses to sanction an act—however weighty the authority which permits it, or extended the example that encourages it, either our consciences are biased by erroneous principles and need reform, or the act in question is criminal and unlawful. This bias arising from exterior causes, forms that variety of consciences we meet with in mankind, and constitutes the necessity of examining those motives which influence our own:—an influence, indeed, which is often mistaken for conscience itself, because, being invariably disposed to flatter self-love—that is, to caress whatever is favourable to the passions, so great an influence have our corrupt inclina-

tions over the powers of our understandings, that they frequently decide for them; and thus, instead of conforming our ideas to the law, the law is often explained to favour them; and consequently as numberless, as dissimilar, as opposite, as are the inclinations of men, so equally numberless and variable may be their rules of conscience.

Even when we are informed by conscience, that our actions are in direct contradiction to the law of God, if unwilling to abandon the object of our pleasure, we are at the same time so desirous of gaining the approbation of conscience, that we instantly endeavour to bring her over to our wishes; and since we cannot exclude her from our breasts, resolve to corrupt her. To effect which purpose, we exhibit all the wicked cunning of Satan;—and at last persuade ourselves, that we not only act with a safe conscience, but perhaps, even determine within ourselves, that what once we foolishly considered criminal, we shall disco-

cover, upon more enlarged and liberal views, to be enlightened virtue.—And thus men form those false consciences, which for a time may lull them into deceitful peace and security, but in the end will draw them into the gulph of misery and endless perdition. *There is a way, says the scripture, which seemeth to a man right, but the ends thereof lead to death.* (Prov. xiv. 12.)

There are two moral maxims, therefore, on the strength of which I intend to ground this discourse:—first, that conscience is a monitor that must always be listened to:—2dly, in order not to incur guilt, we must always act honestly and fairly by her.—In the application of which truths, my endeavour shall be directed in the first place, to show how frequently men criminally decide against conscience in the choice of religion; and 2dly, to detect and expose those false consciences, or false rules of conscience, by which so many vainly hope to justify their decisions.

My Brethren, if there be such a thing as revealed religion,—or if a revealed religion signify any thing,—there must be a road of spirituality marked out by the divine author of revelation, in which every one is bound to walk; that is, there must exist a prescribed form of religion, by which every soul is to worship its Creator. Now as this truth is so founded on reason and common sense, that I believe few reflecting Christians are ignorant of it, it follows, that in the selection of a particular creed, amidst the numerous forms of religion among Christians, each one knows, that having to decide between right and wrong,—truth and falsehood,—to truth alone he must adhere. Yet, my Friends, how many thousands and tens of thousands may we not name, who in direct opposition to conscience and truth, decide in this important affair, on the principle of worldly interest. It is often easy for a man to perceive, that truth rests not with himself, though it may be difficult for

him to say, where it exists ; but this is a sufficient reason for him to proceed in quest of it :—since conscience herself reminds him of the obligation, *of setting his house in order.*

Yet, my Brethren, instead of pursuing this object, it most commonly happens, that he turns to what is nearer to his heart.—“Truth,” he says, “most undoubtedly rests not with me,—but what is to become of my family, whilst I go in search of truth? Have I not my own and their advancement in life to consider? Truth and religion are certainly valuable objects, but can it be supposed that I should renounce my expectations in life? No! I should be wanting in justice to myself and offspring.” (Luke xiv. 18.)—He decides therefore not on the principle of conscience,—but against conscience, on the principle of worldly interest;—on the principle of connexions;—on the principle of human respects;—and to these he unblushingly sacrifices his duty, his virtue, and his eternal

happiness. *He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me,* said Jesus Christ; *and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me.* (Matt. x. 37.)

Quite at variance, then, with this instruction, is the course which thousands pursue, and quite opposite is the manner in which thousands decide. Nay, my Brethren, it often happens, that thus determined, as I have stated, they proceed to investigate those points of controversy on which they are divided against others in religion; and will persuade themselves that their only motive is a regard for their own consciences:—a proceeding which recalls to my remembrance the uprightness of that judge, who first hanged the criminal, and then collected evidence, to see if he could prove that he had hanged him justly. But, my Brethren, is not such a transaction in any one, a complete mockery of justice and conscience? Must he not for the sake of his own honour and reputation give judgment against the sufferer? Would

he not be inclined to explain every circumstance to his disadvantage? Instead of impartially considering the testimony that might be produced, would not his only endeavour be to collect that which would enable him to ratify the sentence? My Brethren, the cases are exactly similar. It is not possible that a mind, which is resolved not to abandon error, can ever fairly examine into truth; it has already received a bias, and in spite of itself, like a ruin must be propelled, as it inclines;—in its progress, shattering or crushing every thing opposed. Thus solid proof will give way to empty assertion, — strength will yield to weakness, and the most powerful argument be subverted by the first start of an objection.

With a view to bring this subject home to the individuals who have the direction of congregations, and who of all men are most bound, in the sight of God and conscience, to come to a true decision, because in all likelihood it will involve the deci-

sions of a multitude, for whom they stand responsible before God and men, I am not afraid openly to affirm, that every minister of religion, out of the Catholic Church, has more or less of doubt, respecting the truth of his doctrine :—an assertion which, bold and comprehensive as it is, I ground upon this other, that no minister, out of the Catholic Church, can be certain of the truth of his faith. The task of proving I leave with those, who admitting the fallibility of private judgment, deny the proposition.—What infallible fallibility ?—What, can absurdity be an attestation of faith ? Yet, my Brethren, notwithstanding this uncertainty in which they ALL stand, is it a question with any one, that in general they act as if they were decided and finally determined ? I know that many, some even of the highest orders, are convinced they are in error.—Others have admitted, that they well know among whom truth is to be found ; and I could name them, were I not resolved, never to abuse their confidence and sincerity. Yet the same breath

that uttered this admission, could ask, what in the event of professing the truth, would become of them and their families? How would their connexions and the world turn their backs upon them?

Others indeed less informed, but equally decided, prosecute their inquiries into religion, yet the very manner in which they proceed, proves that their only object is to confirm and justify a determination already taken. Unlike those open and philosophic minds, which are really in search of knowledge, their endeavour is not to guard against prejudice, but to strengthen it:—their labour, not to confront evidence and authority, but to produce all that is favourable to one side, and to suppress the other.—Their libraries and their counsellors silently tell the resolution they have unalterably formed. The only controversial books you will find upon their shelves,—their Tillotsons, their Stillingfleets, their Foxes, are the depositaries

of calumnies. The only men they consult are those who decided like themselves. Is it thus that the ends of truth and conscience are attained? No! it is but persisting in the first determination, which they formed against conscience, on the principle of worldly interest.

I am fully sensible of the obloquy to which I have exposed myself, by advancing such a weighty charge against a body of men, among whom many may stand high in the public esteem. If I have done it on light and supposititious grounds, my conduct deserves the severest censure; but if otherwise, I have only acted the manly part of duty.* Would to God that these persons had none but the public to judge

* For the justification of myself in making this charge, I refer every one to the controversial works of Protestant divines, and particularly to the writings of Dr. Barrington, Bishop of Durham, who to the end has persisted in repeating the calumny, that Catholics have rejected one of the ten commandments. In portraying Catholics, their constant object has been, not to represent, but to disfigure.

them! I would then be silent. But when I am aware that there is an all-searching eye above, and that the consciences of men anticipate the sentence that will be pronounced hereafter, of guilty or not guilty, I am urged to awaken them to a sense of their danger, and to expose a fault that may prove so fatal to thousands. Whatever obstacle they may be willing to plead in the face of conscience as an excuse, let them remember, that Jesus Christ has pronounced upon it in these words: *Do not think that I am come to send peace upon earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. For I came to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother; and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. And a man's enemies shall be they of his own household. He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me. (Matt. x. 34.)—If thy hand or thy foot scandalize thee, cut*

persons, it is impossible that these con-

it off, and cast it from thee ;—and if thine eye scandalize thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee ; it is better for thee having one eye to enter into life, than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire. (Matt. xxii. 8, 9.)

In the second place, there are other persons, who not having confidence sufficient to trample directly upon conscience, employ milder means to gain their object. They knowingly lead her astray with false counsel, and then appeal to her, thus seduced, for their justification :—which is what is to be understood by acting under a false conscience. For as conscience is a principle immediately connected with, and depending on the understanding, whatever enlightens or obscures the one, will necessarily instruct or mislead the other : on which account, when conscience is doubtful, uneasy, or disturbed, you cannot more effectually compose her alarms, than thro' the medium of the understanding. Hence in settling conscientious doubts on controversy, there is no method so secure, as an

appeal to the learning, authority, and example of others.

To diffide in our own lights and arguments, is not only lawful, but commendable; since ignorance, passion, and worldly motives, often deprive us of the means of deciding for ourselves with truth. But surely when we determine to form our consciences on the authority and weight of others, it should be our first duty to know, if these persons from whom we petition counsel, be men of probity, of learning, and of virtue; — in fine, every way qualified to direct us in an affair, in which we find we are incapable of directing ourselves. If an individual would be highly culpable in executing a deed of importance in law, when unable to speak to its legality or dishonesty, — by what argument can they be excused from guilt, who upon the suborned or defective testimony of others pretend to determine for themselves in religion?

Acting under the instructions of such persons, it is impossible that these con-

scientious Christians can imagine, that they are no ways accountable for what they do; and that if blame be attached to any, it must necessarily repose upon the heads of those who have wrongly advised them. Though I am willing to allow, that the Almighty will not impute to us as a crime, an involuntary breach of any of his precepts, yet when a transgression of his commandments is evidently wilful,—when ignorance is openly courted, there cannot be the shadow of a doubt, but that divine justice will include them in the condemnation of the obdurate Jews;—who, as our Saviour said, *loved darkness rather than light, because their works were evil.* (John iii. 19.) Of this the Scripture furnishes a striking instruction and example in the conduct of the impious Achab, who, as we read, in the third Book of Kings, laying claim to a territory in Syria, *assembled the prophets about four hundred men: and he said to them, shall I go up to fight, or shall I forbear? And the King of Israel*

and Josaphat the King of Juda, sat each on his throne, clothed with royal robes, and all the prophets prophesied before them. And Sedecias made himself horns of iron, and said; thus saith the Lord, with these shalt thou push Syria until thou destroy it: and all the prophets prophesied in like manner, saying, go up and prosper, for the Lord will deliver it into the King's hands. (3 Kings xxii. 6.)

Here, my Brethren, you see the King of Israel ruling himself indeed by the authority of others, but like many Christians, he applies not to the source, from whence wholesome counsel and truth are known to flow. Whoever heard of four hundred prophets being collected together in Israel? Does there appear the shadow of probability to any one, that four hundred prophets would be inspired to declare the will of heaven, when one was sufficient? Neither could Josaphat, the holy King of Juda, believe that these men were to be depended

on. *And Josaphat said,* continues the Scripture, *is there not some prophet of the Lord that we may inquire of him ? Yes, replied the other, there is ONE MAN LEFT, by whom we may inquire of the Lord ; Micheas, but I hate him, for he doth not prophesy good to me, but evil. (3 Kings xxii. 7, 8.)* The prophet, however, is called to the assembly, and looking the King of Israel in the face, tauntingly repeats the words of the false prophets, saying, *Go up and prosper.*—The king suspecting that he was only jesting, adjured him again and again, not to tell him any thing but that which is true in the name of the Lord. Then the prophet declared ; *Now therefore the Lord hath given a lying spirit in the mouth of all prophets that are here, and the Lord hath spoken evil against thee. If thou go up, thou shalt fall at Ramath Galaad,—and all Israel shall be scattered upon the hills, like sheep that have no shepherd. (3 Kings xxii. 15, 16, 23, 20, 17.)* What then was the conscientious conduct of this

king? *Put this man, said he, in prison, and feed him with bread of affliction, and water of distress, till I return in peace.* (3 Kings xxii. 27.)

My Brethren, you condemn the blind obstinacy of this king, who, trusting to the flattering advice of his passions and his courtiers, persisted to his own destruction in the wicked war he had undertaken, notwithstanding the unfavourable prediction of the prophet, whom he himself had styled, by way of distinction, the prophet of the Lord. What a faithful representation, however, is it, of the foolish conduct of many Christians? Look around you and count, if you are able, the number of that multitude, who like Achab in faith and morals, ground their justification on authorities not less suspicious than these four hundred prophets;—and build their consciences, not on the firm rock of truth, but on public example, family interest, deceit, and worldly pleasure. Who pretend a respect for virtue, yet embrace vice,—who feign sincerity, yet prove themselves

hypocrites. Ask those conscientious individuals amongst Protestants, why in the great number of their counsellors and advisers, they have not included one prophet of the Lord, one true priest of Jesus Christ, one minister of the Catholic Church?—Is it that such a person is unknown to them, or of no authority? No ! my Friends.—They would answer, *because we hate him, for he doth not prophesy good to us but evil.* Verily, we cannot say that we know not such a man, we mark him out and distinguish him from other ministers. While the latter are more or less disciplined in deception, he, with firmer countenance, singly stands forth the vindicator of the ancient faith,—the priest of the old religion,—the censurer of the Reformation.

We, therefore, cannot help hating him, as the enemy of our peace, the disturber of our repose. Unlike others whose charity is moulded in the passions, he will not admit an equality in religions, but is ever telling us, that as truth is one, so all must seek and embrace it; for according to the

apostle, *without faith* in IT, none can please God.—We hate him, for with the most illiberal ideas,—with an excess of bigotry he for ever repeats to us, the declaration of Christ, that *strait is the way, and narrow the gate which leads to life, and few there are who find it :—enter ye therefore by the narrow gate :—for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many there are who go in thereat.* (Matt. vii. 13, 14.) — We hate him, for he is continually telling us, in the words of St. Paul, that those who have committed *fornication, uncleanness, immodesty, injustice, have forfeited their inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God,* (Ephes. v. 5. Gal. iv. 19.)—and that the sacraments alone can restore them to mercy and the grace of forgiveness.

My Brethren, it is to my greatest astonishment, that I often observe Christians, drawing fast to the close of life, with just so much knowledge of the Catholic faith and religion, as should make them tremble to

their inmost souls ;—yet coolly passing on to the verge of dissolution, without one effort or expressed desire to compose the anxieties of their minds, by sincere and diligent inquiry. Surely reason and prudence should urge them to procure an interview with some enlightened character of that religion ;—for however prejudiced against that form of worship, it would be a satisfaction to know that they had judged it justly. But no ! they determine to take a leap in the dark, and with a presumptuous rather than a confident hope, venture into eternity, from whence none ever return !

Before I finally take leave of the instructive history of Achab, I wish particularly to fix your attention on one circumstance, strongly exemplifying those endeavours, which are often employed to extort a flattering judgment, when one unfavourable was expected. And the messenger, says the Scripture, who went to call Micheas, spoke to him saying ;

Behold the words of the prophets, with one mouth declare GOOD THINGS to the king : let thy words therefore be like to theirs.

(3 Kings xxii. 13.) Unless men are further in search of guile and deceit, why use a language which is not open and sincere? Why state a proposition, which is ambiguous and equivocal *? Prefacing a

* It is amusing to observe the studied reserve and caution of Protestants, when they accidentally fall into the society of Catholics. Though eager to be made acquainted with what their adversaries think of them, they have not courage fairly to ask them the question And though dubious, anxious, and hesitating in their own thoughts, they assume an air of composure and perfect serenity; for ever repeating; "Oh! my mind is quite settled as to religion." This is an expression none ever hear from a Catholic. And the reason is, because *he really is settled in his mind*. Is it the drunkard or the sober man, that takes the most pains to persuade himself and others that he is sober? A Catholic, then, sees through and through the mask, which the Protestant is accustomed to wear in his presence, and, if desired, could read aloud every thought and sentiment within him.—In proof of the *unsettled* state of a Protestant's mind, how common is it to hear them say in conversation, "Oh! I wouldn't read such a book,—I wouldn't hear such a man speak for the world?"—"I should be miserable."—I should soon be a Catholic myself I am certain;"—and I have often known

speech, with a few compliments on the good conduct, the virtues and the piety of some particular Catholics, these persons will often address us in these terms ; “ We give no credit to the stories which we are told of your worshipping images and saints,—of your selling absolutions,—of your withholding the Scriptures, &c. We believe, that there are plenty of good and holy persons among you, and confidently hope, that in spite of all our differences, we shall come to be happy together in the next life.”—My Brethren, your own experience must inform you that we almost daily hear this language.—It has frequently been addressed to me, by individuals out of our community, and evidently with the design and expectation of obtaining an unqualified approbation and assent. Nor would any thing administer to their consciences so

a Protestant throw a book aside, merely because he thought himself in danger, of being convinced of what, till then, he had only suspected.—*Oh ! ye sons of men, how long will ye be dull of heart ? Why do you love vanity and seek after lying. (Ps. iv. 3.)*

great a consolation as the belief that they had procured it in any shape or form: *Let thy words therefore be like to theirs, and speak that which is good.*

To their great surprise, however, I have ever refused to countenance such an inconsistent proposition:—inconsistent as it regarded them,—inconsistent as it regarded myself. If such, said I, be the real sentiments of your hearts concerning Catholics, then you have subverted those principles on which alone you can pretend to justify your schismatical Reformation,—then you have confuted those arguments and accusations of idolatry and apostacy on which your fathers built their faith; you have proved their separation unnecessary, impious, and erroneous*.—

* “The Roman Catholic and the Protestant religions,” writes a high Church of England authority, are not merely differences in opinion, they are opposite, and must always mutually counteract each other. If the Catholics are right, OUR REFORMATION WAS NOT SUPERFLUOUS BUT ABOMINABLE: A REBELLION AGAINST THE POWERS ESTA-

Again, when called upon on the other hand, to express a confident expectation of their future salvation, "I must refuse", I said, "for I should be the greatest idiot in the world, were I to keep the narrow, rough, and painful course of my ancestors, when I believed that others are safely steering towards the same port, by one more spacious, smooth, and easy. As a Catholic from conscience, from conviction, from moral necessity, I am unacquainted with those justifying salvos, on which you expect to save yourselves."

Here startling they would reply, what then is your conscience so intolerant and uncharitable, as to say that we shall be excluded from salvation*? My Brethren, I

BLISHED BY GOD HIMSELF. If we hold the TRUTH, the chief part of their worship is not only erroneous but idolatrous; an OFFENCE to heaven, instead of a reasonable service. Between such contrarieties there can be no amalgamation."—*British Critic*, vol. 39, p. 641.

* There is something so childish and petulant in this conduct of Protestants, that I am doubtful whether I should gravely notice it. Dont Protestants themselves,

judge you not,—conscience tells me no such thing.—Restricting my sentiments to the

in the same sense of the expression, exclude from salvation all those who disbelieve the Trinity?—Dont they read the exclusive clauses of the Athanasian Creed?—What do they mean by the term Catholic Church?—Why do they speak of heretics and schismatics?—Why do they baptize infants?—Why do they refuse Christian burial to suicides?—Why do they send missionaries to convert Mahometans, Jews, Savages, &c.? Why do they take such pains to circulate the Bible? All this is either essential to salvation, or it is not.—If not essential,—then why do they speak and act as if it were?—But if essential—then they themselves pronounce on the salvation of their fellow-creature, and are guilty of the same intolerance which they blame in the Catholics.—But a Protestant divine himself has elegantly answered to the objection.

“Private judgment,” he says, “according to the apostle’s absolute decision, has no right to *touch* the fundamental doctrines of Christianity. These doctrines are derived from heaven, and must be received as they are given, without the alloy of philosophical speculation or human device. And the apostles, though they possessed not that arbitrary dominion over the faith of the Church, which would have entitled them to teach an optional doctrine of their own, were yet invested with full authority to propagate the *one faith, once delivered to the saints*, and censure and restrain every deviation from its *purity and integrity*.”

religion you profess, I leave your personal merits to be weighed in the scales of eternal justice. But this truth I openly aver;

“But it will be asked, *How is this categorical position to be reconciled to the lenity of the British laws?*” It is not necessary to the truth or obligation of the Gospel, that it should be reconciled at all. Human laws may err, and they have often erred; but the Gospel is the word of God. In this instance, however, the equity of our laws may be vindicated and illustrated by a familiar similitude, which will also shew their consistency with the spirit of religion.

“Under our present government, we are as mariners in a free port. Every man is at liberty to depart when he pleases, and to shape his course as he thinks most convenient. At the same time it is permitted to those officers who are stationed in this port for the preservation of good order, *and it is their duty*, to caution the unadvised not to embark in a rotten vessel, or steer to a coast where *the pestilence walketh in darkness.*”

“This is not persecution. It is no restraint on civil liberty: it is only salutary admonition. The wanderer is invited, he is entreated to remain in a place of safety: he is warned of the danger which may attend his rash departure. This is a friendly office. The advice is good; but it is not enforced by compulsion. It is sanctioned only by the consequential risk and hazard which await *him* who shall refuse to hear, or shall treat with neglect the things which make for his peace.” *Davies's Church Union*, p.77.

conscience most plainly tells ME, that I should exclude myself from salvation, were I to swerve from the Catholic and Apostolic Faith,—and therefore I profess it.—Only answering for myself, I leave others to their own responsibility. On which account many have said, *I hate him, for he doth not prophesy good to us, but evil.* In which outcry even some Catholics have had the folly to join, merely *because I would not prophesy good to others.*

In conclusion then grant, oh my God, the humble prayer of thy servant.—Be pleased to look down upon all with an eye of forgiveness, and remember that we are prone to sin from our very youth.—Extend thy bountiful and assisting grace to those who need it most; lead them to what is holy and pleasing in thy sight, and grant by the precious blood of thy Son, and thy own tender mercies, that as children of one common father, we may all come to enjoy thee, in the beatitude of thy eternal kingdom. Amen.

SERMON X.

ON THE INADEQUACY OF THE BIBLE TO
BE AN EXCLUSIVE RULE OF FAITH.

*From thy infancy thou hast known the
Holy Scriptures, which can instruct thee
to Salvation, by the faith which is in
Christ Jesus. 2 Epis. Tim. iii. 15.*

NOTHING is more astonishing than to see men strenuously contending for that, which, admitted as a principle, must either prove that the religion of Jesus Christ is unnecessary for salvation, or convict the Creator of a direct injustice towards his creature :—I mean that of offering salvation to him through a channel, by which, in his physical and natural state, it would be impossible for him to attain to it. Suppose the royal mercy, for instance, held out only to such criminals, as could explain a difficult problem or parable—

would it not be to sport with every thing sacred and important among men? Would not every one exclaim against a magistrate, or government, charged with such conduct?—Could then such be the act and proceeding of the Deity? My Brethren, the principle to which I direct my observation, is no other than the grand and fundamental maxim of the Protestant Reformation; which imports, that the Sacred Scriptures are divinely made the *single* and *exclusive* authority from which men are to learn their religion. Chillingworth, who has figured so conspicuously in controversy, thus expresses himself on the subject: “I * do not understand the doctrine of Luther, Calvin, or Melancthon, nor the Confession of Ausburg, or Geneva, nor the Catechism of Heidelberg, nor the Articles of the Church of England; nor the harmony of Protestant Confessions; but that wherein they all agree, but that which they all subscribe with a greater

* The Religion of Prot. chap. 6.

harmony as a *perfect rule* of their faith and actions; that is the Bible—the Bible, I say, the BIBLE ONLY is the religion of Protestants.”—Another Protestant authority * says, that “no Protestant establishment can subsist on any other base than this, that the Scriptures are the only rule of faith.” And the 6th Article of the Church of England declares, that “Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation.” Both Luther † and Calvin ‡ inculcated this doctrine.

* Critical Review, 1808.

† Lib. de Serv. Arbit. cont. Erasm. 1 Edit.

‡ L. 4. Inst. c. 9.—Dr. Barrington, Bishop of Durham, in one of his Charges to his Clergy, says, “The Scriptures ought to be to all men, both the rule of their faith and the guide of their practice.”—Dr. Clarke, in a speech before the University of Cambridge, December 12, 1811, used these words: “I as a member and as a minister of the Church of England, do not hesitate to declare, as soon as it shall be proved, that the distribution of the *Bible alone*, is hostile to the interests of the Established Church, then, and then only, be that Church subverted.”—Mr. Vansittart, Vice-President of the Bible Society, in his printed Letter to Dr. Marsh, defends “the complete and absolute sufficiency of the Scriptures, in matters of faith,

My Brethren, the question therefore, before us, is whether the holy Scriptures be the only Christian rule of faith, and consequently that authority from which the nations of the earth are exclusively to learn the Christian religion. You will grant then, if I prove, as I engage to do, that they form no such rule and authority, that I shall have subverted the grand and moving principle of the Protestant Reformation, and consequently Protestantism itself.

as "the very basis of the Reformation."—Lastly, Dr. Herbert Marsh himself, admits that "the *Bible only* is the religion of the Protestant." (*Inquiry*, page 10.)—This is so essentially the principle of Protestantism, that the Doctor declares, on page 21 of the same work, that "the title of Protestant can be refused to no one, who appeals to the *Bible alone*."—He defines these Protestants, "who admit of no reference to any particular creeds, *generalised* Protestants: and calls the religion *generalised* Protestantism, or Protestantism in the *abstract*." It may be supposed, then, that which does admit of "particular creeds" should be termed *concrete* Protestantism!! Most undoubtedly, if I were to chuse, I would prefer the former, since I can conceive nothing so inconsistent as *concrete* Protestantism.

I will reduce my objections against this rule or authority within the narrow limits of the following argument. God, in presenting a form of religion to man, evidently intended to present him with one suited to his nature. But if he has presented him one that is only adapted to the educated part of his race, he has not presented him with one suited to his nature; therefore, as the holy Scriptures are an authority only suited to the educated part of our species, it could not have been the design of God, to make them the very foundation of that religion, which, in his divine wisdom he prescribed to man. Hence I draw my objection from the fact, that God, in these circumstances, would have exacted an impossibility from the creature. For as man exists as much his creature in the wilds of deserts, as in the schools of science, such a proceeding would have no other effect than that of tantalizing him:—nay, would be a most grievous act of injustice on the part of

God. The wretched creature might retort in this language;—"Thou mightest with equal propriety command me to fly, though I have no wings;—thou hast exacted of me what, in reality, it does not depend upon me to perform." And when we take into calculation, all, whose circumstances prove an insuperable obstacle, what a large majority of the human race does it comprise!

Before I proceed to put you in fuller possession of the subject, I will just state the nature of that religious authority, which God has really dispensed to men, and which has ever formed the rule of faith among Catholics in every part of the world. It is simply, that from the ascension of our Lord, there has been, and ever will be a society of Christians, called a CHURCH; from which men may derive every instruction and assistance necessary for salvation. "*I build my Church*, said Jesus Christ, "*and against it the gates of hell shall never prevail.*" (Matt. xvi. 18.)

By this system, my Brethren, we are all placed upon a perfect equality: having been endowed by nature with the organs of hearing and speech, we are enabled to receive and express ideas without the aid of education. He, who is read in books, may take the unlettered savage by the hand, and both together learn from the minister of Christ those truths, which were to be taught to the little (*Matt. ix. 5.*) as well as to the wise. Here the philosopher, the monarch, and the slave, in one common theme of admiration, may praise the equity of that Creator, and sovereign Judge, who has made virtue equally attainable to all. The heathen of China and Japan may study the religion of the christian, and learn it by the aid of interpreters. — The unlettered Laplander may communicate it to his family in his secluded cave.

My Friends, in order to shew that an acquaintance with letters is not essential to the knowledge of the Christian religion, I will engage by actual experiment to

prove, that if twenty persons of equal talents be produced, all ignorant of the art of reading, one excepted, within three days I will communicate to the unlettered nineteen, a knowledge of all those necessary truths and mysteries of the Christian religion, which the biblical student shall not acquire, from his Bible only, at the expiration of the twelvemonth—I will venture to add, at the end of his life, however protracted. In naming three days, I have greatly extended the time that would be essentially necessary. For where the heart is already disposed, a much shorter period would be sufficient. Reflect how few in the earlier ages of Christianity were ever taught to read :—comparatively speaking, perhaps, not one in ten thousands. Besides, if essential to the knowledge of religion, would not the Scriptures themselves have particularly directed our attention to that object? yet Jesus Christ sent Saul to Ananias : (*Acts* ix. 11.)—the angel referred Cornelius to the apostle : (*Acts* x. v.)—and Jesus has pronounced those

exclusively blessed; “*Who hear the word of God and keep it.*” (Luke xi. 28.)

There may be many present, whom I have had the happiness thoroughly to instruct in religion—yet, have I done it with books? You have heard me deliver from this pulpit, instructions on all points of doctrine,—yet I have read little from the Bible to you; and believe I can say for myself, that, before I had read a chapter of the Bible, I knew my religion. My Friends, I will go as far to assert, that if we had never found the use of letters, or should ever be deprived of that noble discovery, the Christian religion would lose nothing essential to its existence, and the whole moral system of faith, as it is practised and professed by Catholics, comprehending the administration of all the sacraments, might be handed down to posterity, as inviolate and unchanged in every material point, as it subsists at present. I am not so weak as to undervalue the discovery of letters—I have styled it a noble discovery, and will allow it the pre-

cedence among human inventions. But if I praise, in the same manner, many other discoveries and inventions,—for instance, the invention of a watch,—or a coach,—does it follow that we could not dispense with these luxuries? How did our forefathers contrive?—Thus the system of religion, among Catholics, is independent of the accidental inventions of man, and suited to him in his natural state of existence. Nay, provided there be no moral obstacle in the individual, the full benefit of it may be reaped, however physically imperfect he may be. The new born infant and expiring age, are equally the object of its benedictions.

Returning then to the fundamenta principle of Protestantism, namely, that the Bible, in print or manuscript, is the only rule of faith and basis of religion, prescribed by God to men *, I must reject

* 'Tho' Luther, Calvin, and the other leaders of the Reformation, assumed to themselves the liberty of making the *Bible only* their religion, they universally refused the same privilege to their followers. Thus Luther insisted

it on the ground, that it would be charging the Deity with the folly and injustice

that *his* Catechism should be taught.—Calvin burnt Servetus for explaining his faith by the Bible.—The Church of England forced every clergyman to swear to the 39 Articles—and every laic to learn the Church Catechism:—and countenanced the infliction of the severest penalties on such as interpreted the Bible according to the principles of Socinus. *See a Concise View of the most important Public Acts and Statutes relative to the Protestant Dissenters, published in the Protestant Dissenters' Almanack for the year 1810.*—The following are the sarcastic reflections of a Protestant on this subject: “The Bible! the Bible only! is the Religion of Protestants!” exclaims good William Chillingworth.—“Very true,” says the judicious Hooker, in his Ecclesiastical Polity; “but then you must submit to receive the Bible from the hands of the Church-of-England-Men.”—“Certainly, the Bible, by all means,” adds the learned Margaret Professor; “yet the Bible is nothing without the Book of Common Prayer.”—“Nay, nay, the Bible is not the thing you want, unless you discover in it all the great and precious truths contained in the Assembly’s Catechism, and can submit to the wholesome discipline of the Directory,” replies the pious and sober Presbyterian. “No, no, no,” says the zealous Methodist, “it is the Bible collated with Mr. Wesley’s Sermons, and Mr. Fletcher’s Checks, that is the religion of Protestants.” “And thou mayest read the Bible and the Checks likewise till Doomsday, friend, to

of binding mankind to a religion, unattainable to the far greater part, and which in the course of possibilities, might be impracticable to all. Now to accuse God of imposing on men the obligation to an impossibility, would be to place the Divine Lawgiver in a situation, where no human legislator would consent to be found. For surely none require to be told, that a book is only useful to those who can read and purchase it:—what kind of a help would it even be to you, if through some awkward circumstance you had never received any education? And

no purpose, unless thou hast the light of the Spirit," adds the modest Quaker.—"A truce with your Spirit!" exclaims the Swedenborgian, "why, don't you read the works of the highly illuminated Baron; wherein are answered all questions, be they high as Heaven or deep as Hell!" "You all are right and all are wrong," rejoins the Rev. Dr. Sturges, the Prebendary of Winchester, "provided the magistrate chooses to say so; for it is his province to decide which shall be the *National Religion*."—*Nightingale's Portraiture of the Catholic Religion*, page 132.

how many Protestants have there been, and are still living, who have never had this advantage? Were the Bible only the religion of Christians, I maintain, that should they come into the world, already endowed from their mothers wombs, with the talent of reading—as birds are self-instructed to form their own nests—to swim and fly—even then would they be insecure, unless they were also born with a Bible in their hands, already printed in that particular dialect and language they were afterwards to learn, as they advanced towards manhood. Besides, what would be the course of proceeding, should these Bibles be burnt in a general conflagration? Would all have money and means to procure others*? And if unable,

* In the reign of Edward Ist. the price of a fair written Bible was 37 pounds; which if we judge by the comparative price of labour, would be now equal to 380 pounds 11 shillings;—for the hire of a labourer was then 3 pence halfpenny per day. The purchase of a Bible would of

would they remain without religion? For the *Bible only* is said to the religion of *Protestants*.

There is a society in this kingdom which acting very consistently on this Protestant principle, most charitably printed at a great expense, thousands and tens of thousands of copies of the Bible, translated we must suppose correctly into various languages—and with a zeal, that deserved a better success, sent them to nations which had them not. Unfortunately however these nations had never been taught to read,—at least in the language of these Bibles,—and though they were born with good understandings, like other men, it was the same, as if pearls had been

course have been equal to the earnings of 2537 days, which, excluding the Sundays, would have filled up the term of 8 years and 33 days. Now, putting the value of a labourer's hire at the present day, as low as 3 shillings a day, it would amount in 2537 days to the sum of 380 pounds 11 shillings; which would be the value of the Bible.—And what would the price have been, if there had been no monks!!!

thrown to swine. In which circumstance we have to account for an incongruity, unobservable in the other works of the Deity. And thus, although the people were well disposed, the Society have found it impossible to give their charitable zeal an effect.

How different was the termination of the labours of the apostles! How different is the success attending a Catholic Missioner, acting on Catholic principles, or in the name of the Catholic Church of Christ. As soon as he has contrived to render himself intelligible to the natives, he announces himself an apostle or minister of that Church, and calls upon them to say, whether they will receive him in that character or not. He unfolds to them the grand motives of credibility, together with the circumstance of the fall and redemption of man. He pledges the unity, the sanctity, the catholicity and the apostolicity of that Church in whose name he preaches—He speaks to them of the sa-

cred and inspired scriptures, encourages the more enlightened to qualify themselves for their perusal: and assures them that his whole doctrine will be confirmed by their testimony. In fine, he calls upon them, to say, if they will receive him in his apostolic character or not. If they consent, he immediately instructs them in all the truths and mysteries of the Christian religion as I instruct you:— If they refuse, he attends to the directions of Jesus Christ to his apostles, and *who-soever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, going forth, out of that house or city, shake the dust from your feet.* (Matt. x. 14.)

But some perhaps will object—“Would not every nation be thus exposed to the deceit of impostors?” My Brethren, there is no instance of an entire nation being thus deceived. — What human motive could urge men, in contempt of every danger and sacrifice, to preach the religion of the cross? Besides, absconding from

the idle fancy of any one acting the impostor in the capacity of a delegate, it is unusual to send a missionary, singly, to announce the Gospel to any nation:—it is therefore the concurring testimony of several that commands attention. *The Lord*, writes the Evangelist, *appointed also other seventy-two; and he sent them two and two before his face into every city and place.* (Luke x. 1.)

But, my Brethren, since you have urged this difficulty as an objection, permit me to retort—and call upon you to say, how, in the first instance, any people are to distinguish what a Bible is.—We will suppose that a vessel freighted in part by the Bible Society is shipwrecked upon the African shore, and that a copy of the Bible, together with a Common Prayer-Book and Milton's *Paradise Lost*, have fallen into the hands of some of the heathenish natives: we will moreover suppose, either that they have been transcribed into the language of that country, or that

by the means of an English prisoner, who had once lived amongst them, some of these savages have been taught to read and understand these works. In these circumstances they would read and admire them—but how would they distinguish that one was more divine than another? The prayers and explanatory articles of religion would be preferred to the epistles of St. Paul; because more intelligible:—the poetry of Milton would be considered more sublime than that of the inspired Prophet:—his history of man's fall more complete, more connected and interesting than the Mosaic account. In short, if a comparison be made by the savage, it would be in favour of that work which is human, and nothing will he discover, which can indicate to him that the Bible only contains the word of God. But how wholly perplexed would he be, were he to attempt to form his religion by it!—No! not a step can he advance unless he first calls in tradition to his assistance—unless he address

himself to one, who being already instructed, is able to direct him. With the Eunuch of Queen Candace he will exclaim, *how can I understand, unless some one shew me?* (Acts viii. 31.) Who then so proper as a minister of the Gospel?—**BEHOLD THE CATHOLIC RULE OF FAITH.**

But you will object; “these savages would thus be exposed to deceit and imposition.”—Once more then I will retort the objection—How are they to know that the Bible is the true rule of faith—or that what is put into their hands for the inspired word of God, has not been equally exposed to the sly tricks of imposition? What security would they have, that they possessed a pure unmutilated copy? None in fact, since even the wiser ones have not been proof against such attempts, but have been the victims of deception. What indeed can afford security against imposition, when the very founder of Protestantism, when those who so loudly advocated the grand principle of the Reforma-

tion, were the first to lay their sacrilegious hands on this sacred volume, and dared to efface, change, and mutilate a text, written by the unerring finger of God. What security have you at present, when these Biblical champions come forward and tell you, that the Bible is to be your only rule of faith, and yet upon you, who have eyes taught to read and examine, impose their mutilated editions—thus making their own inventions pass for the inspired word of God *.

* As the heretical Luther took the lead in the reformation of religion, so also he led the way in the sacrilegious work of corrupting the Scriptures. In the Dutch translation which he gave of the Bible he wholly omitted the 7th verse of the 5th chapter of the first epistle of St. John. But let Protestants themselves speak on the subject.

“Zuinglius writes thus to Luther, concerning his corrupt translation; Thou corruptest the word of God, (O Luther); thou art seen to be a manifest and common corrupter and perverter of the holy Scripture; how much are we ashamed of thee, who have hitherto esteemed thee beyond all measure, and prove thee to be such a man! (Zuing. t. 2, ad Luth. lib. de S.)

Luther's Dutch translation of the Old Testament, espec-

Q Q

My Friends, I conceive nothing more can be necessary, to convince you, that

ally of JOB and the PROPHETS, has its blemishes, says Keckerman, and those no small ones. Neither are the blemishes in his New Testament to be accounted small ones; one of which is, his omitting and wholly leaving out this text in St. John's Epistles; There are Three who give testimony in heaven; the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost, and these Three are One. (Keckerman Syst. 8. Theol. lib. 2. p. 188. 1 S. Job. 5. 7.)—Again, in Rom. iii. 28. he adds the word (ALONE) to the text, saying, We account a man to be justified by faith ALONE, without the works of the law. Of which intolerable corruption being admonished, he persisted obstinate, and wilful, saying, So I will, so I command, let my will be instead of reason, &c. Luther will have it so; and at last thus concludes; The word (ALONE) must remain in my new Testament; although all the Papists run mad, they shall not take it from thence; it grieves me that I did not add also those other two words, OMNIBUS & OMNIUM, sine omnibus operibus, omnium legum; without any work of any law. (Tom. 5. Germ. fol. 141. 144.)

Again, in requital to *Zuinglius*, *Luther* rejects the *Zuinglian* translation, terming the authors in matter of Divinity, *Fools, Asses, Antichrists, Deceivers, &c.* and, indeed, not without cause; for what could be more deceitful and anti-christian, than instead of our Saviour's words, (*This is my body*), to translate, *This signifies my body*, as *Zuinglius* did, in order to maintain his *figurative* signification of the words, and cry down Christ's *Real Presence* in the *Blessed*

the Bible was not intended by God to be the common instructor of mankind—this

Sacrament. (See Zuing. tom. 2. ad Luth. lib. de Sacr. fol. 388, 389.)

When *Froscheverus*, the *Zuinglian* printer of *Zurick*, sent *Luther* a Bible translated by the Divines there; he would not receive it; but, as *Hospinian* and *Lavatherus* witness, sent it back, and rejected it. (*Hosp. Hist. Sacram. Part. ult. fol. 183.*—*Lavath. Hist. Sacram. l. 32.*)

The *Tigurine* translation was in like manner so distasteful to other Protestants, that the *Elector of SAXONY* in great anger rejected it, and placed *Luther's* translation in the room thereof. (*Hospin. in Concord. Discord. fol. 138.*)

Beza reprov'd the translation set forth by *Æcolumpadius*, and the Divines of *Basil*; affirming, that the *Basil translation* is in many places wicked, and altogether differing from the mind of the Holy Ghost.

Castalio's translation is also condemned by *Beza**, as being sacrilegious, wicked, and ethnical; insomuch that *Castalio* wrote a special treatise in defence of it; in the *Preface* of which he thus complains:—Some reject our *LATIN* and *French translations of the Bible*, not only as unlearned, but also as wicked, and differing in many places from the mind of the Holy Ghost. (* In Respons. ad Defens. &c. Respons. Castel. in Test. 1556, in Præf. &c. in Annot. in Mat. 3 & 4. Luc. 2. Act. 8 & 10. 1 Cor. 1.)

That learned Protestant, *Molinæus*, affirms of *Calvin's* translation, that *Calvin* in his *Harmony*, makes the text of the Gospel to leap up and down; he uses violence to the

is a Catholic principle ; and it is on this account that we do not indiscriminately

letter of the Gospel : and besides this, adds to the text. (Molin. in sua Translat. Nov. Test. Part. 12. fol. 110.)

And touching *Beza's* translation, (which our *English* especially follow) the same *Molinaeus** charges him with *actually changing the text* ; giving likewise several instances of his corruptions. *Castalio* also, a learned Calvinist, (as *Osiander* says) and skilful in the tongues, reprehends *Beza*, in a book wholly written against his corruptions ; and says further,† *I will not note all his errors, for that would require too large a volume.* (*In Test. Part. 20. 30. 40. 64. 65. 66. 74. 99, & Part. 8. 13, 14. 21. 23.—† In Defens. Trans. p. 170.)

In short, *Bucer*, and the *Osiandrians*, rise up against *Luther* for false translations ; *Luther* against *Munster* ; *Beza* against *Castalio* ; and *Castalio* against *Beza* ; *Calvin* against *Servetus* ; *Illyricus* both against *Calvin* and *Beza*. *Staphylus* and *Emserus* noted, in *Luther's* Dutch translation of the New Testament only, about one thousand four hundred heretical corruptions. And thus far in respect to the confessed corruptions in *foreign* Protestant translations. (See Lind, Dub. pag 84, 85. 96. 98.)

If you desire a *character* of our *English* Protestant versions, pray be pleased to take it from the words of these following *Protestants* ; some of the most zealous and precise of whom, in a certain treatise, entitled, *A Petition directed to his most Excellent Majesty King JAMES the First*, complain, That *our translation of the Psalms, comprised in our BOOK OF COMMON-PRAYER, doth in addition, subtraction,*

toss our Bibles to the multitude. But what should be your degree of astonish-

and alteration, differ from the truth of the HEBREW, in at least two hundred places." If two hundred corruptions were found in the Psalms only, and that by *Protestants* themselves, how many might be found from the beginning of *Genesis*, to the end of the *Apocalypse*, if examined by an impartial and strict judge? And this they made the ground of their scruple, to make use of the Common Prayer; remaining doubtful, "*Whether a man may with a safe conscience subscribe thereto.*" Yea, they wrote and published, a particular treatise, entitled, *A Defence of the Minister's Reasons for Refusal of Subscribing*. The whole argument and scope of which is exclusively concerning *mis-translating*. Yea, the reader may see, in the beginning of the book, the title of every chapter (twenty-six in all) pointing to the *mis-translations* there noticed in particular. (Petition directed to his Majesty, pag. 75, 76.)

Mr. *Carlisle* vouches, *That the English Translators have depraved the sense, obscured the truth, and deceived the ignorant: That in many places they distort the Scriptures from the right sense, and that they shew themselves to love darkness more than light; falsehood more than truth:* which Dr. *Reynolds* objecting against the Church of *England*, Mr. *Whitaker* had no better answer than to say; —*What Mr. Carlisle, with some others, has written against some places translated in our Bible, makes nothing to the purpose; I have not said otherwise, but that some things may be amended.* (That Christ descended into Hell, pag. 116, 117, 118. 121. 144. *Whitaker's Answer to Dr. Reynolds*, pag. 255.)

ment, to be informed, after all you have learned this day, that the more enlightened

The Ministers of *Lincoln* Diocese could not forbear, in their great zeal, to signify to the *King*, that the *English* translation of the Bible is a translation that takes away from the text, that adds to the text, and that (sometimes) to the changing or obscuring of the meaning of the *Holy Ghost*; calling it yet further, *A translation which is absurd and senseless, perverting (in many places) the meaning of the Holy Ghost.* (See the Abridgment which the Ministers of *Lincoln* Diocese delivered to his Majesty, pages 11, 12, 13.)

For which cause, *Protestants* of tender consciences made great scruples of subscribing thereto: *How shall I* (says Mr. Burgess) *approve under my hand, a translation which hath so many omissions, many additions, which sometimes obscure, sometimes pervert the sense; being sometimes senseless, sometimes contrary.* (Burgess's Apol. Sect. 6, and in Covell's Ans. to Burgess, pag. 93.)

This great evil of corrupting the Scripture, being well considered by Mr. *Broughton*, one of the most zealous sort of *Protestants*, obliged him to write an epistle to the Lord's of the Council, desiring them with all speed to procure a new translation: *Because* (says he) *that which is now in England, is full of errors.* And in his Advertisements of Corruption, he tells the Bishops, *That their public translation of Scripture, into ENGLISH, is such, as that it perverts the texts of the Old Testament, in eight hundred and forty-eight places, and that it causes millions of millions to reject the New Testament, and to run to eternal flames;*

Protestants themselves have reversed their principle, and have resumed that to which

A most dreadful saying, certainly, for all those, who are forced to receive such a translation for their *only Rule of Faith*. (See the Triple Cord, pag. 147.)

King *James* the First, thought the *Geneva* translation to be the worst of all; and further affirmed, *That in the marginal notes annexed to the GENEVA translation, some are very partial, untrue, seditious, &c.* Agreeable to this are also these words of Mr. *Parkes* to Dr. *Willet*, *As for the GENEVA Bible, it is to be wished, that it was either purged from those manifold errors, which are both in the text, and in the margin, or else utterly prohibited.* (See the Conference before the King's Majesty, pag. 46, 47. Apologies concerning Christ's descent into Hell.)

Now these our Protestant *English* translations being thus confessedly corrupt, absurd, senseless, contrary, and perverting the meaning of the *Holy Ghost*; had not King *James* the First just cause to affirm, "*That he could never yet see a Bible well translated into ENGLISH.*" And whether such falsely translated Bibles ought to be imposed upon the ignorant people, and by them received for the *very Word of God*, and for their *only Rule of Faith*, I refer to the judgment of the world; and do freely assert with Dr. *Whitaker*, a learned Protestant, *That translations are so far only the Word of God, in as much as they faithfully express the meaning of the authenticated text.* (Conference before his Majesty, pag. 46. *Whitaker's Answer to Dr. Reynolds*, pag. 235)

they had objected in the Catholic Church. According to Mr. Lancaster's* system of education, writes a distinguished Protestant preacher, "After the youth has made sufficient elementary progress, the *Bible* is put into his hands, and without creed, or catechism, or commentary, he is left to form his own selection of doctrine. How little such a *vagrant* introduction is fitted to advance the interest of real and practical Christianity, I will leave to the common sense of any man to determine: to me it appears the readiest and shortest of all methods to form SCEPTICS and INFIDELS. It is, in truth, no other than the vain delusions of Rousseau reduced to practice. This philosopher, in his utter detestation of prejudice, thought it best to leave

* I am far from wishing to derogate from the just claim, which Mr. Lancaster has upon the gratitude of his country. His system of education is the best that can be devised for the poor. Provided, therefore, I am allowed to explain the CREED and the SCRIPTURES to the child, I care not who is employed to teach him to read them—except that I should certainly prefer him who best succeeds.

his imaginary pupils entirely to themselves; to let them grasp after wisdom, uninfluenced by paternal solicitude, and undirected by hereditary information. But it was soon discovered that a savage, not a sage, would be the result of this absence of prejudice, and but a few years must convince the public, that any thing but a Christian, may be formed from this wild and unbottomed scheme of instruction.— It is a system which under the pretended garb of Christianity could only introduce a more probable species of infidelity and scepticism,—call this religious initiation what you may, it is a mere scaffolding for deism; and if the youth of any country were universally educated in it, we need not hesitate to assert, that within the course of a few years, there would be less of Christianity subsisting in that country, than there is in any part of Europe, which can be mentioned at the present moment.*”

* The Crisis of Religion, by the Rev. E. W. Grinfield, pages 14, 19, 20. Rivington.

Surely, then, an instrument so destructive, is ill calculated to build with.

Another very high Church authority * among Protestants, expresses astonishment, that it could be supposed, "that the nations of the east might be converted to the religion of Christ merely by translating the Bible into their several languages, and circulating those translations among such of the natives as can read: "Were, indeed, *the mere studying the Bible*, it continues, sufficient, not only to convert idolatrous nations from their errors, but also to make them *members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven*; why were the apostles commanded *to go into all the world, and PREACH the gospel to every creature*, when they could have written the gospel in all the languages of the earth, and thus converted the nations by writing, without incurring those dangers, to which,

* British Critic, vol. 38, p. 584.

by travelling and preaching they were daily exposed?"—" * It is in vain to say, that those who can read, may derive their own religious principles from the word of God ; for a variety of knowledge, to which the *lowers orders of society can never attain*, is necessary to enable any man to extract from the Bible a system of religious principles, calculated to direct his conduct in every circumstance which may occur during life."

And lastly, the learned Dr. Marsh, a distinguished Professor of Divinity in the University of Cambridge, most earnestly contends against the Protestant principle. † " Let me ask," he says, " whether the Bible itself is not capable of perversion, whether the best of books may not be misapplied to the worst of purposes? Have we not inspired authority for answering this question in the affirmative? St. Peter himself, speaking of the Epistles of St. Paul, said, " In which are some things

* British Critic, vol. 39, p. 591. † Inquiry, p. 7.

hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, unto their own destruction." Would St. Peter, if he had lived in the present age, have thought this admonition *less* necessary, than in the age of the apostles? Can churchmen, therefore, who know, that one party wrests the Scriptures, by the aid of false interpretation, into authority for the rejection of the Trinity, and the Atonement, that another party wrests them into authority for the rejection of the sacraments, that other parties again, on the authority of the same Bible, prove other doctrines, which are at variance with our own, think it unnecessary, when they distribute Bibles to the poor, WHO ARE INCAPABLE WITHOUT ASSISTANCE OF JUDGING FOR THEMSELVES, and who alone are the objects of gratuitous distribution, can churchmen, I say, under such circumstances, think it unnecessary to accompany the Bible with the Liturgy, in which the doctrine of the

Trinity, the Atonement, the sacraments, with other doctrines of our Church, are *delivered* as contained in the Bible? It is not the Bible itself, BUT THE PERVERSION OF IT, the wresting of the Scriptures (as St. Peter expresses it) by the “unlearned and unstable,” with which England now swarms, that the danger proceeds, and this danger must increase in proportion as we neglect the means of counteracting it.”* He also acknowledges, in the plainest

* This is exactly the steady, sober language, which the Catholics have used for two hundred years, whilst the Reformers have run mad with the Bible fever.—I once listened to a sermon preached in a dissenting Baptist-chapel in the country, on the origin of authority and power.—I say, here, nothing of the mischievous tendency of the preacher’s instruction—either as it related to civil or religious authority:—but joining, in my way home, an individual of the congregation, I endeavoured to draw from him some information respecting their practices in religion. Understanding that the first Sunday in every month, *without any direction from Scripture*, is appointed for receiving the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper, my inquiry was, if all received it? “No,” he replied, “only those who, *have an interest in Christ!!!*” And have you,” said I, “ever received it?” “No,” he

language, that therein men may sedulously seek without discovering the very essentials of the Christian religion. His words are, * “even in the essentials of Christianity, very *different* conclusions have been drawn from the Bible, and by men, of whom it would be very unjust to say, that they had not studied it *devoutly*.”

My Friends, I believe that I have now completely finished my engagement, to prove, that the Bible cannot be intended

answered, “I have not yet been baptized.” “You must be above forty,” I continued, “and don’t you intend to be baptized before you die?” “I don’t know,” he answered. —“But,” said I, “are you not commanded in the Bible to be baptized?” “Would you not be afraid to die without baptism?” “No,” he repeated, “unless I thought I *had an interest in Christ*.”—Now this man was going home to read his Bible, and a pretty hand he would be at it!!!! Is not such a system, then, a complete reflection on common sense?—I wish every man of understanding would attentively read the first chapter of the Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians. With him, I will ask, *Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?—the foolishness of God is wiser than men: and the weakness of God is stronger than men.*

* Inquiry, page 27.

by God, as the ONLY rule and authority, from which men are to learn religion ; and, therefore, I have succeeded in subverting the grand and fundamental principle of the Protestant Reformation. But here you will sensibly observe, look to thy introductory text, and see if it do not contradict thy words—*From thy infancy thou hast known the Holy Scripture, which can instruct thee to Salvation, by the faith which is in Christ Jesus.* (2 Epis. Tim. iii. 15.)

My Brethren, this very text forms an additional proof of the unfitness of Scripture to be a rule of faith for all men ; by shewing the great learning, the great prudence, and the great experience which are necessary for the study of it. Of all sciences, that of the sacred Scriptures is the most complicated and profound ;—it comprehends the moral history of man—unfolds the views and proceedings of God, and requires, in the student, deep and universal learning. To understand the Scriptures, it is not sufficient that the reader discover

the true meaning of a solitary passage—he must, moreover, be acquainted with the circumstances in which it was written, and the persons to whom it was addressed. He must be able to combine the facts and passages which are connected, in order to collate and compare them—he must take advantage of the lights and learning of others:—and all this is necessary even to ground a hope of escaping confusion and error. Let us now, for one moment, review the text before us. Is it not true that *the holy Scriptures can instruct to Salvation, by the faith which is in Christ Jesus?* Yes, most true—they do instruct us to salvation when properly understood. But that Scripture is the vital rule of instruction, is a consequence that by no means follows. For first, I ask, with an authority already quoted, “Was not St. Paul and the other apostles, sent also to instruct to salvation? 2dly, Why did Jesus Christ promise to be with the pastors of his Church till the end of the world, unless that they might in-

struct to salvation? Besides, what were these Scriptures of which St. Paul here speaks to Timothy, and *which he had known from his infancy?* Were they the New Testament? No—that volume was not even written;—yet would not nine out of ten of these private biblical judges, suppose that he was speaking of it, and thus be led into error? If any doubt remain on this subject listen to the authority of the apostle St. Peter,—*In the Epistles of St. Paul certain things are hard to be understood, which the unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.* (2 Epis. iii. 16.)

My Brethren, I wish you also to observe, that to the greater part of mankind, the Bible had not even an existence till full fourteen centuries after the establishment of Christianity. For until the invention of printing, which happened about that period, copies of the Scriptures were only to be found among the rich and the

learned, and it was not till a considerable time after, that men were able generally to take advantage of that fortunate discovery. Nor let the Protestant suppose that this was the effect of the Reformation. The light which has shone upon the world, is accidental, and the natural consequence of the fortunate invention of printing. And if we consider the difficulties against which men had to contend previously to that event, in the acquisition of science, we shall find much greater cause for expressing our admiration at the proficiency which they made*, than at the extent to which it had been carried in modern times.

In conclusion, I believe it only remains for me to state the real faith of Catholics on the subject of the holy Scriptures. My Brethren, we believe that they are a part of the inspired word of God, and may be read by all Christians with benefit to

* See the Antiquities of the Saxon Church by Lingard.

piety and virtue. We wish all to be acquainted with the Scriptures—we wish all to understand them well *. Yet at the same time, we wish all to recollect, that,

* The following injunctions respecting the Scriptures are extracted from the Council of Trent, Sess. 5. c. 1. de Refor. Lest the heavenly treasure contained in those sacred books, which the Holy Ghost, with an excess of bounty, has presented to mankind, should lie neglected, the holy Synod, mindful of the pious ordinances of Sovereign Pontiffs and approved Councils, embracing them and strengthening them with additions, has ordained and decreed, that in churches where there exists a prebendary, or benefice, or salary under any other name, set apart for lecturers on sacred Scripture—the Bishops, Archbishops, Primates, and other local ordinaries, shall oblige and compel those, holding such prebendary, benefice, or salary,—to expound and interpret the sacred Scriptures themselves, should they be equal to the duty—or by a proper substitute, remunerated, if necessary, out of the said benefice, and chosen by the Bishops, Archbishops, or other local ordinaries.—Moreover, such prebendary, benefice, or salary, shall be exclusively conferred upon persons who are equal to discharge the office themselves—any other appointment being null and invalid. But in Metropolitan and Cathedral Churches, if the city be great and populous, as also in Collegiate Churches of any considerable town, though not bishoprics, should there be a numerous clergy, without any

as far as the writings of the New Testament are concerned, they have an exist-

prebendary, benefice, or salary of this nature,—then, *ipso facto*, the first vacant benefice, to which an incompatible office is not annexed, shall be considered set apart and for ever assigned to that object: cases of resignation being excepted. And if in such church there do not exist such benefice, or one adequate, the Metropolitan or Bishop himself at the head of his Chapter, by an assignment of the fruits of some simple benefice, its just obligations continuing—or by a contribution from such as hold benefices in the city and diocese,—or in any other manner which may be most convenient, shall see that the lecture on sacred Scripture be given; yet not so as any way to interfere with other lectures, established by custom, or for any other intent. And in those churches whose annual income is small, and where the clergy and people, are not sufficiently numerous, conveniently to have a lecture on theology, let there at least be a master chosen by the Bishop, at the recommendation of the Chapter, who may instruct the clerical and other poor scholars in grammar, in order, that with the assistance of God, they may be enabled to proceed to the study of the sacred Scriptures. And therefore let the fruits of some simple benefice be assigned to such master of grammar, to which he shall be entitled as long as he continues to discharge that duty; at the same time, however, the benefice is not to be diverted from its proper object:—or let some provision be made from the episcopal or capitular tables—or let the

ence subsequent to the preaching of the Gospel to all nations. Gospel, or GOD'S-
SPELL, in old English, signifies God's-
word, and is both written and unwrit-

Bishop provide for him in that way which may be most convenient to himself and the diocese. So that this pious, useful, and excellent institution on no account whatever be neglected. In Monasteries of Monks also, where it can be conveniently effected, let there be a lecturer on Scripture. And if the Abbots prove neglectful in providing one, let the Bishops of the places, in quality of apostolical Legates, expressly delegated for this purpose, by regular proceedings compel them to compliance. In the convents moreover of other Regulars, where studies can be conveniently prosecuted, let there be also appointed a lecturer on Scripture, chosen from the most able professors, by the general and provincial chapters. And moreover, in public universities, where this most honourable and necessary of all lectures has not been instituted, let the piety and charity of religious princes and governments provide for it,—so that the Catholic faith may be defended and strengthened, and sound doctrine protected and propagated. And where the lecture has been instituted, but discontinued, let it be re-established. And lest under the form of piety, wickedness should be disseminated, the same holy synod has ordained, that no one shall be admitted to this office, either publicly or privately, who has not been examined by the Bishop of the place, as to his life, morals, and learning, and been approved by him, &c.

ten *. The Catholic Church has never absolutely prohibited, but simply regu-

* In the Bible we observe, that mention is often made of writings, which are not at present existing, viz. ; *Is not this written in the book of Jasher ?* (Josua x.13.) sometimes also styled the *Book of the Just*, (2 Kings i. 18.)—Again, *Solomon spoke three thousand proverbs, and his songs were one thousand and five.* (3 Kings iv. 32.)—*The acts of David, first and last, are written in the book of Samuel the Seer, and the book of Nathan the Prophet, and the book of Gad the Seer.* (1 Chron. xxix. 29.) The books of Nathan the prophet are again noticed in 2 Chron. ix. 29. as also *the books of Ahias the Silonite, and the visions of Addo the Seer.* And in chap. xii. ver. 15. notice is taken of *the books of Semeias the Prophet, and of Addo the Seer*,—which appears to be a different work from his book of visions, specified above. And in chap. xiii. ver. 22. mention is made of the *history of Abia, of his ways and works, by the prophet Addo*—and in chap. xx. 34. of *the book of Jehu, son of Hanani*—and chap. xxxiii. 19. alludes *to the works of the sayings of the Seers*.—We have also lost the *Book of the Wars of the Lord*, cited in Numbers xxi. 14.—Likewise the *Annals of the Kings of Juda and Israel*, so frequently mentioned in the books of *Kings* and *Paralipominon* : which Annals were written by the prophets who lived in the kingdoms of Israel and Juda. We also want the works noticed in 3 Kings iv. 33. and 2 Mac. ii. 1.—It is incumbent then on the advocates for the sufficiency of Scripture, as an exclusive rule of faith, to inform us, by what means we are to procure this lost-written word of God, in addi-

lated the reading of the Scriptures:—
and if she ever appeared averse to that

tion to those books which are extant—For if, as the apostles (*Heb. i. 1.*) inform us, *God spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets*—and (*2 Peter 2 Ep. chap. i. ver. 22.*) *that the holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*—it is evident, to demonstration, that we want some parts of the written word of God—and, of course, that the Protestant rule of faith is proved, by the written word itself, to be mutilated and defective.—In addition to this, it may be observed, that St. Paul in his *first Epistle to the Corinthians* (*chap. v. ver. 9.*) says, *I wrote to you in one Epistle*—Quere—Where is it?—St. John also tells us, (*2 Epist. ver. 12.*) *that he had more things to write;—but would not by paper and ink—but would tell them face to face.* He repeats the same in his third Epistle, verse 13.—reserving what he had to say, until he could speak *mouth to mouth*:—and in *chap. xxi. ver. 25.* of his Gospel he declares, *that the world itself could not contain the books which might be written.*—It was not till the world had existed two thousand years and more, (during which period men had been directed by instruction or tradition,) that Moses, the first Scripture writer, began to write.—Our Saviour committed no part of his doctrine to writing,—nor even the apostles, till disputes began to arise among the converts. The written word, then, succeeded their preaching; yet they *wrote* to none whom they had not previously *instructed*.—St. Luke (*chap. i. ver. 2.*) tells us, that he composed his Gospel from tradition;—and in

practice, it was at a time when a spirit of novelty took possession of men's minds—when unlearned mechanics became preaching theologians, and when the professed object was to subvert and change that faith which had been once delivered to the saints. Continue then, my Brethren, to read them, but under the guidance and instruction of that Church, with which Jesus Christ is *to abide all days, even unto the end of the world.*

verse the 4th, mentions instruction to have preceded, in the mind of Theophilus, the written word which he addressed to him.—Again, when St. Jude found it necessary to *write*, it was, as he observes, (chap. i. ver. 3.) *to beseech his disciples to contend earnestly for the faith once DELIVERED to the saints.*—In short, was the faith of Stephen and others who expired, before the New Testament was committed to paper, a written faith?—Was the faith of Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, &c. a written faith?—Is the faith of children and youth, a written faith?—Do not Protestants teach the Creed, termed the Apostles' Creed, before they teach the Scriptures?—*Out of thine own mouth I judge thee.* (Luke xix. 22.)

SERMON XI.

ON THE OBLIGATION OF RECEIVING THE
CHURCH INTERPRETATION OF SCRIPTURE,
AND THE NECESSITY OF OBEDIENCE TO APOSTOLICAL AUTHORITY,
AS TAUGHT BY PROTESTANTS.

Understanding this first, that no prophecy of scripture is made by private interpretation. For prophecy came not by the will of man at any time: but the holy men of God spoke, inspired by the Holy Ghost. 2 Peter i. 20, 21.

* “**T**HAT the deliberation of human judgment has little or nothing to do in the affairs of religion, has been asserted by ma-

* *Davies's Church Union*, p. 1.—My sole object for inserting the above sermon, in this series, is to shew that in our more severe and rigid explanations of the Gospel, we are fully supported by the testimony of Protestants themselves; and that exclusive principles have not been car-

ny professors of Christianity : whilst others on the contrary have maintained that eve-

ried farther by Catholics than by British Protestants. With the exception of the few words then, printed in capitals, every line and sentiment of this sermon are given as faithful extracts. Should it be considered too long for one discourse, it may be divided and read as two ; employing the same text for both divisions.—A very high authority in the Protestant Church, whilst reviewing the work from whence this sermon, with the exception of one passage, is entirely extracted, has characterized it in the following language.

“ From these specimens of Mr. Davies’ Sermons, the theological reader must have already discovered what are his principles, and what his mode of maintaining them : he must perceive that he is a sound, or as men of modern liberality will say, a *high* churchman, such as were Archbishop Potter, Bishop Sherlock, and Bishop Horsley ; and he must likewise have perceived that like those,—his great precursors, he has the address to support what he believes to be the truth, in a manner that can give offence to no man, who admits the two great Protestant principles, *free inquiry*, and *fair dispassionate debate*. When we meet with such works, it is our wish to recommend them to the public ; and not to supersede, by our analysis and extracts, the importance of reading them. Influenced by these motives, we shall merely enumerate the texts and subjects of the remaining discourses, assuring our readers that the author’s reasoning—“*servatur ad imum*,

ry thing must submit to the criterion of man's understanding, and that no doctrine is to be received, no precept acknowledged, as binding, till it's truth has been approved, and it's fitness ascertained by the light of reason. But he who embraces the Christian religion as it has been taught by Christ himself, and his Apostles, cannot fully subscribe to either of these maxims."

qualis ab incepto,"—and that we have not, for many years, read a volume of sermons, which to us appeared calculated to be productive of greater good." *British Critic*, vol. 39. p. 332.

The Rev. George Hutton, D. D. in a printed Visitation-Sermon, inscribed to Dr. Tomline, the present Bishop of Lincoln, inserted the following eulogium on the same work. "Since the foregoing Sermon was sent to the press, I have read with great satisfaction a Work lately published, entitled, "Church Union. A series of Discourses, in which it is urged, that the great Christian duty of maintaining Communion with the Apostolical Church, remains uncanceled by the Tolerance of British Laws. By Edward Davies, Rector of Bishopston in the Diocese of St. David's." To Dissenters and Separatists of every denomination, and to all persons "halting between two opinions" on the subject, I earnestly recommend an attentive perusal and deep consideration of that convincing performance."

*“It follows, that the deliberation of human judgment, or the lights of reason, must have it's due place, and it's proper exercise in the affairs of religion; for by this alone we shall be qualified to comply with the apostle's precept, in *proving all things*. But it must also have it's just limitations, by certain fixed and unalterable principles; otherwise we shall never know where to *stand still and see the salvation of our Lord*; we shall want a power to ascertain, and *hold fast that which is good*.”

“We may then consider St. Paul in this passage as instructing the Church how to form a *right judgment*. Such as is recommended by our Lord, when he says, *Judge not according to appearance, but judge a righteous judgment*. And this determination of the mind, is to be acquired, by allowing reason it's lawful exercise, and keeping it within it's proper sphere.”

“The very idea of judgment implies a discrimination and decision of the mind, agreeably to some definite rules, and certain principles. The term, indeed, is often misapplied. Men are generally disposed to dignify their own vague and accidental fancies, their mere surmises, in matters of religion, by the title of *judgment*. But it is not every notion, adopted at random, that has a claim to this appellation. Principles must be felt, facts must be compared, and circumstances weighed, before a legitimate opinion can be formed; and he that is incapable of this, can never be the real possessor of judgment.”

“He may insist upon the right of thinking, and judging for himself; but if he does this, he must be content to abide by the consequence of his own decisions.—If he judges foolishly, and absurdly in his worldly affairs, he may plead a right to use his own discretion in that which concerns himself, but he cannot at the same time merit the character of a wise and pru-

dent man ; for the thoughtless, the wavering, the capricious, whose notions of the same things are variously determined, by the successive changes of their own passions, or the shifting impulse of external objects, can never be deemed men of judgment, even in civil society."

"So in religious matters, a man may allow his thoughts to wander in one devious tract to-day, and in another to-morrow, as shall seem best to himself, and who can restrain him ? But the guesses, and surmises of such a man cannot deserve the name of *Judgment*, because his mind is not under the direction of any certain and steady principles."

"The question, then, is not whether a man has a physical power, or a natural right, to indulge his private notions, but whether those notions constitute a legitimate judgment, consistent with his profession, and in conformity with the character which he assumes.—And in the business of religion the determination of this

point is a thing of no light importance—for though the irregular bias of thought whilst confined to the breast, must necessarily elude the cognizance of human laws, it is not therefore morally lawful; nor will it escape the notice of that Being, who is the great *Searcher of the heart*. And as the perception of certain fixed principles, is an essential requisite to the very act of judging, so it is necessary to the forming of a *right judgment*, that the leading principle, or rule of judging, be founded in truth; for without this, the mind can never distinguish, and *hold fast that which is good*.”

“Thus one man may have laid it down as a principle, that the world has hitherto wandered in ignorance and error, and consequently, that reason commands him to strike out a new path diametrically opposite to the maxims which have been generally received. Another may have resolved, that the voice of reason, has been audible in all ages, and in all ranks of society; and therefore, that nothing can be certain-

ly right which has not obtained the common consent of mankind.—With a third it may be the leading axiom, that every man is an independent agent: he therefore insists upon having an opinion of his own, and labours to display the peculiarity of this opinion as a proof of his independence: whilst a fourth contends, that every thing ought to submit to established precedent and public authority. These men may make the fairest deductions from the principles which they respectively acknowledge; yet it is scarcely possible, that, upon a single question of importance, the judgment of any two of them can coincide. And as truth is always consistent, and error various, it must follow, that three of them, at least, want a perfect rule of judging, and are under the direction of erroneous principles.”——“The first operation then of a right judgment, in matters of religion, must be to discover certain just principles; and ascertain their truth and stability.”

* “For the weakness of the human mind is in nothing more apparent than in its propensity to abuse and pervert the best gifts of the Almighty: and this is in nothing more visible than in that best gift of all, our Reason. That most excellent Faculty, which was given us in order that we might acquaint ourselves with our Creator, and by understanding his will, and conforming ourselves to it, secure the blessings which He has prepared for us, has been in many cases so employed, as if it had been rather designed to draw away our attention and our love from God, than to bring us nearer to him. Often it is taken up with the most empty and frivolous pursuits; and often has its utmost subtilty and vigour been exerted only to perplex and confound that which was before evident and clear. In contemplating some of its most laborious operations, one is almost

* Sermon preached before the Bishop of Lincoln, by the Rev. T. Le Mesurier, May 23, 1809.

tempted to suppose that the effect produced was purposely intended, like the golden apples of which we read in fabulous history, to divert us from our proper course,"

"Thus it has happened that the religion of Christ, which in its very promulgation was declared to be "revealed to babes," that is, to the weak and ignorant, has been so perplexed and clouded," BY THE STUBBORN PRIDE OF HUMAN REASON, THAT WHAT WAS DESIGNED TO BE SIMPLE AND EASY, IS TO NUMBERS OBSCURED WITH "such doubts and difficulties as even the best informed and the most wise have been greatly puzzled to remove and unravel."

* "The Apostle denounces a solemn curse upon any man, or even an Angel from heaven, who should preach any other gospel than that which the Church of Christ had received from his appointed ministers. And this curse extends to any teacher whatsoever, who should add to, diminish from, or pervert the true spirit

* Church Union, page 15.

of that Gospel which he delivered to us in the records of the New Testament.—And, lest the judgment of the Church should be corrupted by the infusion of any false principles, by any thing that might tend to efface the authority of revealed truth, it is seasonably guarded by this emphatical charge, *Beware lest any man spoil you, through philosophy, and vain deceit, after the traditions of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.* (Col. ii. 8.) And of such importance is the observance of this caution, that the same Apostle earnestly repeats the charge to his beloved convert the Bishop of Ephesus—*O Timothy! keep that which is committed to thy trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science, FALSELY SO CALLED, which some professing, have erred concerning the faith.*” (1 Tim. vi. 20, 21.)

“Thus it appears that the light of reason has no authority to alter or pervert the truth, as it is revealed in the word of

God. And to him who resolves, under the direction of a right judgment, *to prove all things, and to hold fast that which is good*; this must be a self evident proposition; for the philosophy and boasted science of man must fall infinitely short of *his* wisdom, by whose inspiration the holy scripture was given. It is therefore the duty of every one who professes the Christian religion, to acknowledge that the scripture contains A sacred rule of faith, and of religious deportment. But to the well-being of a Christian Church, and to the preservation of due order amongst it's members, many internal regulations are necessary, beyond what scripture has expressly defined, or particularly declared. And such things, a right judgment will deem to be more within the sphere of human deliberation, than those definite truths and sacred precepts which bear the seal of divine authority. Yet still, he, who forms a right judgment, will be under the direction of some fixt and

accurate principles. He will perceive, that the laws of order, which are summarily laid down in the Gospel, have been unfolded, and more fully brought to view, in the Constitution of the primitive and apostolical Church. And hence he will acknowledge, that the internal regulations of a Church of Christ, it's form of worship, and rules of discipline, must, in no respect, be contrary to the word of God; and that, agreeably to the injunction of this word, *all things must be done decently, and in order, and to general edification*—to the training up of the members of that Church, according to the perfect model, laid down by the apostles of our Lord.”

“Notwithstanding, therefore, the disciples of Christ may justly claim a right of deliberation, in such matters, they cannot, under the direction of a right judgment, rashly suggest a mode of worship upon the plan of novel fancy, or individual conceit.—As the advancement of true religion, and the preservation of good or-

der, are the ends to be aimed at, it will be necessary to observe the fundamental laws of the Gospel, on the one hand; and, on the other, to acknowledge some lawful and competent authority, in the visible Church. And in order to ascertain what authority may be deemed lawful and competent to the maintenance of good order, it must be the obvious resource of a right judgment, to contemplate, with respect, the constitution of the primitive churches, which were founded by the Apostles of Christ, and to pay a due regard to such regulations as obtained a general consent amongst them, and which, therefore, appear to have existed, from the age of their first establishment. For true piety, under the direction of a right judgment, will not disallow that mode of worship, that law of order, which was of apostolical institution. It is then requisite, in order to the forming of a right judgment in matters which pertain to the Christian religion, to have a sacred regard to the Holy Scriptures,

and a steady attention to the model of the primitive and apostolical Church.—These were the great principles upon which our pious forefathers judged and acted.—And while we adhere to the same principles, we cannot want means to support the steadfastness of our own minds, or a rule to prove, and judge of, the various doctrines and suggestions of men.”

THEREFORE * “if one Separatist, humbly lamenting the tenderness of his conscience, and another boldly insisting upon the freedom of opinion, reject the fellowship of the APOSTOLIC † Church, and seek the truth of the Gospel from those Pastors, who in their several conventicles, plead a secret and special call to the ministry ; the man who has rightly formed his judgment upon the authority of the word of God, and the example of primitive Christianity, will, in vain, be invited into their society, whilst he sees that the Church of Christ, was constituted as one undivided body.—That

* Church Union, p. 26.

† In the original *established*.

those who, upon the like frivolous pretences, forsook the fellowship of that body, who either renounced its faith, or despised its discipline, were not, during the primitive, and purer ages, even ranked under the name of Christians, but were regarded by the whole apostolical Church, as *Heathen men, and as Publicans* : and that, in the age of the apostles, and in every age of the true Church, no man could be duly acknowledged as a minister, who did not derive his authority, by public, and official appointment, from the apostles of Christ, and therefore from Christ himself, the great Shepherd of the Universal Flock."

"Many cases of a parallel nature might be specified : but let these suffice, as examples of the application of a right judgment, in *proving all things* ; and it's invincible force in *holding fast that which is good*."

"Upon the whole then, we may conclude, that human judgment, or the light of reason, has it's due place and office in

the affairs of religion : but that notwithstanding this, it's lawful operation is bounded, by certain fixt and determined limits : that the plea of judgment cannot be allowed to a professed Christian, unless he judge fairly and consistently upon Christian principles ; and that a discriminative acknowledgement of the divine authority of holy Scripture, and a respectful attention to the constitution of the primitive and apostolical Church, are leading principles, necessary to the forming of a right Christian Judgment."

*HUMAN † "judgment, according to the apostles' absolute decision, has no right to *touch* the fundamental doctrines of Christianity. These doctrines are derived from heaven, and must be received as they are given, without the alloy of philosophical speculation, or human device.—And the apostles, though they possessed not that arbitrary dominion over the faith of the

* In the original *private*. † Church Union, p. 77.

Church, which would have entitled them to teach an optional doctrine of their own, were yet invested with full authority to propagate the *one faith, once delivered to the Saints,*" and censure and restrain every deviation from its *purity and integrity.*"

* YET "such is the authority claimed by various teachers of modern times, who have invested themselves with the ministerial office. Of these, there are multitudes who persuade their disciples, that it is no sin to withdraw from the unity of a Church, which has been established upon apostolical principles, and is the model of the primitive and purer ages of Christianity. And this they do, under the pretence of the rights of judgment. I call it a *pretence*, for it is nothing more. When the *sect* is once formed the right of judging is taken from the individual, and lodged in the society at large, under the controul of it's teachers. The same tenets, however irregular, must characterise the

* Church Union, p. 72.

whole fraternity ; otherwise, the fraternity has to divide again, under the direction of the same SPIRIT which tore it asunder from the MOTHER * Church."

" Thus in one conventicle the assembly is taught, that the sacraments and ordinances of the Gospel may be safely dispensed with, or that they ought to be wholly rejected—in another, that salvation is to be obtained by Faith alone, without works of righteousness—in a third, that the Scripture is to be received as AN EXCLUSIVE rule of faith, or even that Christ is to be regarded only in the line of a prophet, or of a moral instructor. And wherever these tenets prevail, they must be acknowledged through out the society, as the sacred badge of brotherhood.—This is not therefore, A WELL REGULATED judgment, but the judgment of *faction*. It is the mere adoption of the notions of men, who assume an *arbitrary dominion* over the faith of their followers, and teach

* Originally established.

not the Gospel of peace, but the vague suggestions of insubordinate minds."

"To become the founder of a single sect, upon such principles, the teacher must assume to himself powers far more extensive than those which were committed to the apostles of Christ. The work which he undertakes demands an exercise of authority, which those apostles neither claimed to themselves, nor conceded to the Churches.—They never asserted an authority to mix their own judgment and speculation in the *doctrine* which they taught: they acted under a limited commission. The terms of this commission they deemed it their sacred duty faithfully to execute, and strictly to enforce. And being fully persuaded that their commission came from God, the Supreme Lord of all, they not only made it the great rule of their ministerial conduct, but also in the most authoritative language, impressed upon their converts the absolute necessity of

complying with its terms in their fullest extent."

"Thus for example, St. Paul addresses the Churches of Galatia:—*I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the Grace of Christ, unto another Gospel, which is not another—for in reality, the doctrines of men, the suggestions of human judgment, are no Gospel at all:—But there are some that trouble you, and would pervert the Gospel of Christ: But though we, or an angel from heaven preach any other Gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.* Such is the apostolical sentence; and lest the Church should deem this strong language, as the sudden and unguarded effusion of zeal, it is again repeated deliberately—*As we said before, so say I now again, If any man teach any other Gospel unto you, than that ye have received, let him be accursed.*" (Gal. i. 8, 9.)

"To those ears which have been sof-

tened down by the lenient spirit of our laws, and by that laxity of principle, and contempt of discipline, which have sprung from the abuse of those laws—to those who imagine that because all religions are equally tolerated, one must be as good as another ; and that it does not signify what faith a man professes, provided he conduct himself regularly in civil society, and serve God according to the free dictates of his own conscience, or the choice of his judgment,—to these men, the passage which I have now recited, must carry a harsh and dictatorial sound.”

“ But such passages demand attention, they are addressed to us individually ; for they are the words of that law by which we must be all judged in the last day. I therefore justify my own conduct, in recalling them to your notice, by the language of the same apostle. *Do I now persuade men, or God ? or do I seek to please men ? For if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.* (Gal.

i. 10.)—It is then, my duty to remark, that the anathema which is here pronounced upon any man, or even an angel from heaven, who should preach another Gospel, or deviate from the common faith, brings into narrow limits that freedom of opinion which is often claimed in our land, as the right of judgment.”

IT FOLLOWS THEN FROM WHAT HAS BEEN ALREADY SAID, AND IN THE WORDS ALREADY EMPLOYED, “that it will be necessary to observe the fundamental laws of the gospel, on the one hand; and on the other, to acknowledge some lawful and competent authority in the visible Church;” * TO BREAK FROM WHICH “is in itself a grievous sin—expressly forbidden in the gospel of Christ,” † AS SHALL APPEAR IN THE SEQUEL.

SECOND PART. ‡ “That no great sin can be committed without some heinous

* Page 18. † Page 291.

‡ Church Union, p. 157.

act of impiety against the Supreme Being, some notorious crime against the order and welfare of society, or some remarkable vice which debases the private character below the standard of fashion and popular opinion, is an idea too prevalent amongst MEN*. An offence in either of these respects, is certainly a grievous sin; yet the simple and primary notion of sin, is the transgression of a declared law and ordinance of God. Hence as Christ is a Teacher come from God, universal obedience to his laws, and an unfeigned observance of all things, which he appointed in the constitution of his Church, are indispensably required of all his disciples, as they would avoid the imputation of sin, and the dangers of its punishment.”

“† The great duty of preserving the Unity of the Church, in obedience to the command of our Divine Master, was, in the apostolical age, emphatically asserted,

* Originally *us*.

† Church Union, p. 121.

and zealously maintained ; inasmuch as this Church is represented as one individual body, of which Christ is the head. Thus the apostle tells us, that the Father, *gave Christ to be the head over all things to the Church which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all.* (Eph. i. 22, 23.) Nor is this body to be regarded as an undistinguished mass, without internal order and harmony of parts ; for the same apostle exhorts his converts, that they, *speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ : from whom the whole body, fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.*" (Eph. iv. 15, 16.)

"Thus it appears, that the Church of Christ is a *well-organized body*, in which every member has its due place and office, and the several parts have a mutual subserviency and co-operation to the good of

the whole—Wherefore St. Paul exhorts, *that there be no schism, or breach in the body ; but that all the members should have the same care one for another.* (1 Cor. xii. 25.) He does not speak of the local congregations of the Church as distinct bodies; *for we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one member one of another.*" (Rom. xii. 5.)

"* The Church consisted of one community, or spiritual body politic; for, however its members were locally disposed, they were all united into one fraternity, by the profession of the same faith, by an uniform obedience to the precepts of the gospel, and by the common bond of charity or brotherly love. This fraternity of believers was placed under the care of the apostles, and of those ministers whom the apostles should officially constitute and appoint. And beyond the limits of this united fraternity, the acknowledged Church

* Church Union, p. 198.

of Christ did not extend. IT INCLUDED NO SECTARIES.—Neither Christ himself nor his apostles recognized any professor who separated themselves from this constituted body, either upon principles of faith, or rules of government and discipline. Our Lord, indeed, had foretold, that many such Separatists should come in his name, saying, *Lo ! here is Christ, or, Lo ! there !* but the general charge to his disciples is—*Go not after them, nor follow them.*”

“ Here, then, we may perceive the grounds of sanction, by which the law of discipline might be enforced. As union and fellowship with the apostolical Church were essential to the very being of a Christian, so a due submission to the internal regulations of that Church was requisite to preserve the individual in it's essential unity. And it was by this sanction that a law of wholesome discipline was ratified and enforced for the edification of the Church, for the maintenance of Christian

obedience, and the preservation of good order and a godly conversation.”

“ Under the operation of this discipline, smaller offences were corrected by admonition, reproof, and brotherly censure ; but the obstinate and irreclaimable was punished by a separation from the communion of the brotherhood.”

“ And such a law of discipline was promulgated and authorized by our Lord himself, who directs, that the offending brother, if he first of all despise private admonition, and then neglect to hear the Church, is to be regarded *as an heathen man, and a publican*. Thus, we find, that the Church derived from it's Great Master a power of censure, extending so far as to place the contumacious out of it's communion and fellowship : and this power is vested in the apostles, and their duly constituted successors. For our Lord immediately adds—*Verily I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven, and whatsoever ye shall loose on*

earth, shall be loosed in heaven. (Matt. xiii. 17, 18.) And again, just before his ascension, he solemnly commits this same power to his apostles, in the following words:—*Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained.*" (John xx. 23.)

“From hence it is clear, that the censures and absolutions which the authorized Ministers of the Gospel justly and officially pronounce for the orderly government of the Church, are recognized at a higher tribunal.—And this is the power which St. Paul tells us, in the text, that the Lord hath given him;—a power to discard the disorderly member from the communion of the faithful, so that, without sincere repentance, and public reconciliation, he shall no longer be acknowledged as a true disciple of Christ. And whosoever despised this power, which was only to be exercised in the one apostolical Church, must be considered as renouncing the government

and denying the authority of the Son of God.”

“Here the latitudinarian exclaims—
“What! so rigid an enforcement of uniformity, without any toleration, or liberty, for those who may happen to think otherwise! What is this but setting up the most horrid system of tyranny!!”—

“Were Christianity that undefined thing which many in the present day suppose it to be, there might be some weight in such an objection; but if we take our account of this religion from the tenor of the Gospel, all arguments of this kind must be entirely divested of their force. There we find, that the flock of Christ is to be governed as one united society; and of this society no man can be deemed a member who refuses submission to its laws, and regulations. Without this, he cannot be a *Christian*: but he is not therefore deprived of his natural liberty; he may be whatever else he pleases.”

“It follows, that the enforcement of

uniformity *in the Church*, is no more a tyranny than the enforcement of the established laws in any other community.”

“The power of discipline is spiritual, not temporal. In the age of the apostles, as well as in this in which we live, there was a choice permitted to every individual.—No man is compelled to be a Christian at all. But if Christianity be his choice, it is better for him to be a Christian in reality, than in vague and licentious professions, like the Nicolaitans of old, or the disciples of Simon the Sorcerer. And men cannot be real and orderly Christians, without submitting to the laws of Christ, and continuing in the unity of the apostolical Church.”

“The Gospel informs us of no independant sects, which might receive the excommunicated person into another division of Christ’s mystical body.—When the official sentence is pronounced, the offender is separate from the communion of Christians.—He is in the state of the un-

converted ; and therefore, said to be delivered to Satan—to *that Spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience.*"

"* In the present age a general sentiment seems to prevail, that Christianity allows every man *to walk after the imagination of his own heart, and to do what is right in his own eyes.* As a natural consequence of such a mode of thinking, every attempt to expose the folly and danger of departing from the straight rule of the Gospel is censured, as *rash and illiberal Judgment.* And for the purpose of enforcing this censure, has often been repeated that question of the apostle—*Who art thou, that judgest another man's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth.*"

"That all rash and uncharitable judgment is expressly forbidden ; and that whoever goes beyond what is written, in censuring the conduct of his brethren, and pronounces a sentence of condemnation by the weight of his private opinion,

* Church Union, p. 218.

or a conceit of his own self-sufficiency ; is chargeable with great offence ; these are truths which no sincere and well-informed Christian can deny.”

“ But widely different from this is that duty which is incumbent upon every faithful Minister of the Gospel, to open the sacred records, and truly, and impartially to report such cases as have been already adjudged and determined, and also to warn every professor of Christ’s religion, that the authority of this book will be recognized in the supreme court in that great day, *when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ.*”

“ In this book then, it is plainly laid down and declared, that the Church of Christ upon earth, was established in perfect unity of *fellowship*, of *faith*, and *doctrine* guarded by a wholesome *law* of *discipline*, and placed under the care and superintendence of a duly-constituted ministry, which derived its appointment and

authority through Christ, from God the Father of all."

"And to those who acknowledge the New Testament, as the rule of their faith, as that code which unfolds the foundation of their hopes, and the terms of their responsibility, I would recommend as a subject of serious and necessary consideration the manner in which the apostles of Christ spoke of those who should introduce *divisions* and *heresies* prejudicial to that unity."

"St. Paul thus pathetically exhorts the Corinthians to avoid the first tendency towards a diversity of judgment in the Church:—*Now I beseech you Brethren by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you ; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind, and in the same judgment ; for it hath been declared unto me, of you, my Brethren, that there are contentions among you.—Divisions and Contentions !—How far had*

they proceeded, and what effects had they produced? Had they gone beyond what is deemed in our age, the lawful exercise of judgment?"

* THERE IS a "passage in which it has been presumed that the spiritual presence of Christ is promised to the members of separate conventicles, it runs thus—*Where two or three are gathered together in my name there am I, in the midst of them.*" (Matt. xiii. 20.)

"But such an application of these words could have arisen only from a practice which men too frequently indulge, to the perversion of the Gospel, and the hazard of their own immortal souls: I mean, the taking of a single sentence out of its connection, and for the purpose of supporting their own prepossessions, giving a general extent to that declaration, which the Scripture has limited to its particular and appropriate subject. For if, in the case before us, we consider the intent and

* Church Union, p. 261.

design of the whole paragraph, we shall perceive that our Lord, in the first place, gives directions how to treat a member of his Church who shall have trespassed against his brother. If he can be reclaimed by private admonition, it is well : if not, the matter is to be discussed before two or three witnesses ; and if this fail of effect, it is finally to be laid before the Church. But if the offender neglect to hear the Church, he is thenceforth to be accounted *as a heathen man, or a publican* ; that is, he is to be removed from the communion of the faithful.—Here the Unity of the Church is clearly implied ; for without this, such a law of discipline, could neither be sanctioned, nor enforced. Accordingly, our Lord, immediately proceeds to give his apostles authority to excommunicate, and absolve, in all necessary cases, for the preservation of good order in this *one undivided Church*—*Verily I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven ; and what-*

soever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven. Again, I say unto you—that is, not to the multitude at large, but to the Apostles, the appointed stewards of his church; I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth touching any thing that ye shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. Then immediately follows—For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them. And these words conclude the paragraph.”

“Thus we see that our Lord does not here address himself to the People at large, but to his Apostles in particular; and this at the very time when he gives them instructions, for the due and orderly government of his Church—when the essential unity of this Church is inculcated, and the awful sanction of its discipline declared and ratified. But by the implicit tenor of the apostolical commission, the same promise of our Lord’s spiritual presence extends from them to the duly-constituted mini-

sters of the visible Church—to those who should believe in Christ—*through their word*—to those *disciples* whom they should *make in all nations*. But these disciples were not only to be baptized in the true faith, but *to observe all things, whatsoever our Lord commanded his Apostles*, and therefore, to continue in the unity of the apostolical Church. And to this Church, and its faithful members, the promise of Christ's spiritual presence properly and exclusively applies.”

“That it cannot be extended without limitation, to every nominal professor, must be evident to every man who reads the Gospel with singleness of heart.—For our Lord himself says—*Many shall come in my name, saying I am Christ, I have obtained an unction or a special call of the Spirit—and shall deceive many.* (Matt. xxiv. 5.) With these *deceivers* he does not promise to be spiritually present, notwithstanding they assemble in his name.”

“Again:—Many will say to him in the

last day, *Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name have done many wonderful works?*”

“These persons not only assemble and teach in the name of Christ, but, during this life, they boldly confide that their ministry is acceptable in his sight; and they persist in retaining this confidence to the day of judgment. In that day, however, we find they will be woefully convinced that *Christ was not in the midst of them*. For he will profess unto them—*I never knew you!*—I never acknowledged you as my Ministers, or appointed you to teach in my name—*depart from me ye that work iniquity!* ye that transgress the law of Order which I established in my Church.” *

* These are far from being the sentiments of an individual, but rather the authorized doctrine of the established Church. Dr. Tomline, Bishop of Lincoln, has lately published a voluminous work, “A REFUTATION OF CALVINISM,” to prove, that the Calvinists, that is almost all the sects of Dissenters in this country, are in a state of perdition, holding doctrines “contrary to Scripture, to the

“This dreadful sentence, it is fully evident, does not apply to those servants

writings of the ancient Fathers of the Christian Church, and resembling opinions of earliest heretics;” and he terminates the climax by saying, that they are contrary “to the public form of the Church of England.” Though this prelate, like all his brethren, seems afraid to speak out, and whilst he lays down the premises leaves it to others to draw the conclusion, it is easy to perceive that he considers such Christians in the road of perdition—for either these errors are essential or unessential in his opinion—if essential in his judgment, then his Lordship has hardly written with sufficient candour—but if he believe them unessential, then he has only armed himself with spear and buckler to fight the winds—opus inutile!——*See also the following extracts from other Protestant writers.*

“To those then who differ from us, and who in consequence think fit to separate themselves from our communion, we would in all meekness and charity address ourselves: “Suffer the word of exhortation. Search the Scriptures. Examine the ground-work of our principles. Bring the doctrines and the duties of our Church, and its form of government, to the test of holy Writ. Measure your own by the same standard. The faith of Christ must necessarily be one and the same. Uniformity must be its constituent quality. Were it not so, one system of religion would be as good as another, and it would be a matter of no moment what communion you adopted. But our blessed Saviour himself prayed to his Father to preserve his first Apostles in unity; and those same Apostles

who have abused the talents *committed to their charge*. The men, we see, are treat-

have given the most earnest and affectionate exhortations against HERESY and SCHISM. If then you look to the Lord Jesus Christ as the head of that body, of which you profess yourselves members, you must take his religion as you find it delivered to you. *You cannot choose for yourselves. You are not authorized to desert the Church which He has established, and to set up one of your own. You are not at liberty to profess any tenets you may think fit,—to form your own faith, your own regulations of discipline, your own mode of worship, on the suggestions of your own fancy and caprice; for this would be in direct contradiction to the injunction of St. Paul, who tells you, that “THERE SHOULD BE NO SCHISM IN THE BODY, and who exhorts “you all by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, TO SPEAK THE SAME THING AND TO HAVE NO DIVISIONS, BUT TO BE PERFECTLY JOINED TOGETHER IN THE SAME MIND AND IN THE SAME JUDGMENT.”* True indeed it is, that the mild and indulgent Church of England *tolerates* every difference of opinion, and every species of separation from its communion. But you cannot be ignorant that *toleration* is not *approbation*; you cannot be ignorant, that the holy Scripture, and not the Toleration Act, is the standard to which you must have recourse, and that it is the rule by which your faith will be judged accordingly. This is indeed a most awful consideration, and deserving to be deeply impressed upon your minds, as the holy Scripture expressly and authoritatively declares, that “there is but one Body and one Spirit, and one Hope of our calling, one

ed as absolute *strangers*, who notwithstanding they profess to have preached the

Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of all." Our blessed Saviour too assures us, that "there shall be one Fold and one Shepherd." And in the Epistle to the Hebrews we are told, "that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever."

"In stating schism, or a breach of unity by a causeless separation from the Church, to be a sin, a statement warranted by the authority of St. Paul, I could expect nothing less than the disapprobation of schismatics, and of the defenders of schism. On the same principle, if I were to divert my animadversions against the crimes of adultery and fornication, I should expect the censures of all who are guilty of those crimes. I am not however therefore to be deterred from animadverting on the sin of schism, or on the crimes of adultery and fornication. "To the lukewarm, who talk of the danger of giving offence, and of the inutility of controversy, it is sufficient to reply, that if no offence is given, no edification will be given; that the Bible itself is from beginning to end a book of controversy against error; and that self-defence is not only perfectly lawful, but in the existing circumstances of the Church an imperious duty. Shall we preserve a silence, which would be a species of suicide, to please those who would rejoice thus to make us fall by our own hands? No. We can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth. A most awful responsibility is upon us, to restrain to the best of our power the propagation of error, to provide for the profession and preservation of the true faith, to pray that our belief and that of others may be strength-

Gospel, had never been appointed or acknowledged as ministers in the Church of

ened; and, while we profess unfeigned charity for the defects and errors of others, to guard against any conduct which may ever so remotely tend to produce a lukewarmness with regard to the true faith, or to lead the unstable disciple of Christ to think with less horror than he ought to think, of *all false doctrine, heresy, and schism.*"—*Sermon preached before the Bishop of Lincoln in 1812 by the Rev. George Hutton, D. D.*

"Such being a true representation of our Church, we conceive that to separate from her communion, for the reasons above assigned, is a flagrant breach of charity, a Schism of a most dangerous tendency, pregnant with innumerable evils, and what cannot but expose the seceders to the anger and just judgment of God."—"With sorrow and grief of heart I observe, that the leaven of a Schism of a very dangerous and mischievous tendency is, and has been for some time past, fermenting in this kingdom. It daily increases; bears a formidable and terrific appearance; and threatens to burst out, like a volcanic explosion; and to involve the dearest interests of society in ruin and devastation.—It has originated, shall I say with the Methodists, or Evangelicalists?" (*No, the writer should say with the Church of England Protestants.*) Its promoters, "are teachers without knowledge, preachers without commission or authority; and empirics in the fullest sense of the word, in all matters of religion."—*Extracts from a work, ON THE SIN AND DANGER OF SCHISM, by the Rev. A. Burnaby, D. D. Archdeacon of Leicester.*

Christ. Again:—*The seven sons of Sceva, and other vagabond Jews*, assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus, and even pretended to work miracles in his name! but the evil Spirit leaped upon them and overcame them, and they found to their cost, that Christ was not in the midst of them.”

“This promise, then, of the spiritual presence of Christ, is, like the other promises of the Gospel, to be understood with due limitation, and referred to those who, in the profession of the true faith, in the practice of unfeigned obedience, and in union with the apostolical Church, are gathered together in his name.”

“It is in vain to look further for either authority or countenance to an act of separation from that Church. There is no such thing to be found. Separation is expressly forbidden in the word of God; and that word does not *say*, and *unsay*, it is not *Yea* and *Nay*, but *Yea* and *AMEN*!”

“It therefore behoves every man who contemns this great law of order—who of-

fends against the Unity of the Church—however truly he may teach the general truth of the Gospel—however fervent his feelings, or sincere his devotion—to reflect with seriousness and awe, that the most specious form of godliness will never compensate for his perseverance in a system of disobedience. For the Scripture declares, that they who support this conduct, *while they promise liberty to their disciples, are themselves the slaves of corruption.*”



SERMON XII.

ON THE PROTESTANT SECTS.*

Who art thou, that we may give an answer to them that sent us? What sayest thou of thyself? John i. 22.

THERE was a time, my Friends, when unity of faith and doctrine blessed this happy land, and Christians were strangers to those jealousies and divisions, which have unfortunately been the consequence of a change of faith. As our divine Saviour had ordained, they then formed one fold under one pastor, and a communion of sacraments and prayers kept them joined in the religious bonds of charity and peace.

* SECT, derived from the Latin participle *sectus*, signifies the *part* separated or cut off, *pars secta*. Thus a lopt branch is the sect of a tree,—an amputated limb, the sect of a body. The term however is often improperly applied to the object from which the sect is drawn.

Whether they entered a church in the north or in the south of Britain, they found the same sacrifice offering up to God, and from the mouths of different ministers heard a uniform explanation of the same doctrine. But now that the seamless garment of Jesus Christ has been rent into innumerable divisions, now that the flock is completely scattered and dispersed by what has been falsely called a reformation *, and separated into small and

* "The † universal cry was "REFORM!" and when this call was rejected another still more powerful and dreadful was raised of "DESTRUCTION!"—"As to the immediate influence of the reformation on the manners and moral habits of the people, there was but too many unfavourable proofs that little good was done in this way. Brandt, in the Dedication of his History of the Reformation in the Low Countries, draws an unpleasant picture of the spirit of the Reformed Christians, immediately succeeding the Reformation. The Protestants he observes, have not made a good use of the reformation; that, instead of innocence, gentleness, humility, and charity, vice, persecution, hatred, envy, and self-love, have prevailed among them; that every body accommodates the word of God to

† Nightingale's Port. of the Cath. Rel. pp. 115—270.

independent bodies, is abandoned to every species of disorder and confusion, the voice

his own prejudices; and has a gospel of his own making. The Protestants, he adds, have recourse to the secular arm: they use violent means to gain proselytes. Many of them, when they separated from the Church of Rome, rejected not only what was bad in that Church, but also what was good, or, at least innocent."——"† That great and immutable principle, *The Right of Private Judgment in Matters of Religion*, having been once acknowledged, it was no longer in the power either of Catholics, or the Reformers of Catholics, who do not appear to have been themselves aware of the lengths to which that principle would carry the human mind, to stem the impetuous stream of liberty, which burst forth on the Christian world. "Let every man be fully persuaded in HIS OWN MIND," was a text which myriads began to descant, who had never before listened to any others except—"Thou art Peter—feed my lambs—feed my sheep;" "hear the Church." Priests had long ridden the people, and now the people, having obtained their *liberty in Christ*, determined in their turn to ride the Priests. Wherever the reformation took effect, authority was at an end: yet a struggle for mastery ensued. It was the emancipation of Intellect, and a thousand speculations, some rational and modest, others wild and unruly, were indulged, to the astonishment of many, and the grief of more. All pretended to antiquity; every one pleaded the authority and sanction of Scripture, the

† Page 255.

of the true Shepherd is distinguished but by few: while the multitude, in their ex-

earliest Fathers, and general Councils of the Church, the example of the Saviour, and the precepts of his Apostles. From the self same premises, the most contradictory conclusions were deduced; yet all and every of them claimed a suitable portion of infallibility and authority. In no point were the jarring reformers so agreed as in their hearty abhorrence of the Church which they had all deserted:

“’Twas Babel, Antichrist, and Pope, and Devil.”

On a sudden, a new flood of light burst upon the wondering sight of multitudes. Articles of faith, opinions, forms, and practices, held sacred for centuries by the whole Christian World, were discarded, ridiculed, abhorred and condemned, as blasphemous, idolatrous, damnable, and heretical, dangerous to the souls of men, inimical to the peace and well-being of Society, derogatory to the honour of God, and subversive of truth, reason, and common sense. Men stared with astonishment, and were ready to beat themselves with vexation, to think they should have been reading the prophecies of Daniel, the Epistles of St. Paul, and the Apocalypse of St. John, from their youth up, and could never before discover, that the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, was all the while nothing more nor less than the mystical Babylon—a whore—a scarlet whore—a drunken scarlet whore, nay, the very mother of harlots, bloated with the wine of her abominations; reeling and

tremity of disorder, are glad to follow any conductor who is willing to lead.

intoxicated with the blood of the saints, and ripe for the sickle of God's eternal vengeance. This discovery, however it might shock the timid and fearful, gladdened the hearts of those who had courage to make head against the Beast; and these courageously resolved not only to "hate the whore," but to "make her desolate and naked, eat her flesh, and burn her with fire*." Before all this could be accomplished, it was evident that some better Church should be planted. A Christian country without a Christian Church would have been like a head without a body, or a body without a soul. Therefore, every one proceeded, forthwith, to strike out such a model as suited best his own views of the matter; and Doctors and Theologians, of every possible description, took their seats among the learned or the unlearned, as the case might happen to be, in almost every town of Ger-

* Those who are acquainted with the writings of our earliest reformers, and particularly with those of Luther, will know that in this and other places, where I have alluded to their spirit and language, when speaking of the Pope, and other Catholic Prelates, not the slightest exaggeration has been used. On the contrary, it is a fact that scurrility, even to the most indecent and immodest extent, was not unfrequently resorted to by Luther and others. See particularly tom. ii. and vii. of his works. *Nightingale.*

My Brethren, though Christianity in this country, present you the no very pleasing and agreeable sight, of a motley group of religious societies, chiefly to be known by their dislike and hatred to each other, I would not have you imagine that you cannot discover the glorious and illustrious Church of Christ, which was planted upon a rock, and by his promises secured till the days of eternity, against the powers of hell. For, my Friends, although sects have multiplied around you, in the last two centuries, I may address you in the words of St. John, *there hath stood one in the midst of you, whom many of you know not*, (John i. 26.) and tho' drowned in the clamour of prejudice and contention, still the voice of truth has never ceased to speak. From that unhappy period, when by the delusive cry of reformation, Holland, England, Denmark, Sweden, Switzerland, and other places:

"All quit their spheres, and rush into the skies."

Such is the account which a Protestant writer has sketched of the Reformation.

tion, Christians were seduced from that obedience, which they owed to the spiritual authority of Christ's Catholic and Apostolic Church, and in defiance of his threats, did impiously establish themselves as separate bodies, under the delusive title of reformed churches, they have been constantly exhorted to return to the path of duty and salvation. To them has often been addressed the beautiful language of the Almighty to his people; *Thou hast prostituted thyself to many lovers: nevertheless return to me, saith the Lord, and I will receive thee. Lift up thy eyes on high: and see where thou hast not prostituted thyself:—return, oh ye revolting children, saith the Lord,—and I will take you one of a city and two of a kindred and bring you to Sion. And I will give you pastors according to my own heart, and they shall feed you with knowledge and doctrine. Return, oh ye rebellious children, and I will heal your rebellions.* (Jerem. iii. 1, 2, 14, 15, 22.)

My Friends, you have seen by the evidence of Protestants themselves, that in-

dependently of the Scriptures, there is an authority in the visible and apostolical Church of Christ, to which every Christian is bound to submit—and that separation from the communion of that Church is the CRIME OF SCHISM.* Confident therefore that I am addressing the lovers of truth, I boldly state, that my object in this discourse is to induce you fairly and seriously to inquire into the nature and principles of the different religious societies which exist in this country; in order that you may distinguish the visible and apostolical Church of Christ, and religiously embrace her communion.

From the period of the Reformation, Christianity, in this country, has exhibited two grand divisions: the one Catholic, the other Protestant. The former consists of those who adhering to ancient principles, have rejected the innovating doctrines of the day:—whilst in the latter class are included those different sects, which

* See Sermon the 11th.

then *protested* * against and have since abjured the authority of the Catholic Church. These originally separated from the parent stock in two grand branches—the Lutheran and Calvinistic: which have since been again rent and split into divisions almost innumerable.—However, in their minutest sections, they still display the characteristic features of the original heresies of the two heresiarchs. As in every species of animal or order of plants, we observe the character of the class to which by nature they belong, so each of these subdivided sects may be known, either by their rooted hatred of the supreme Bishop of Rome, and aversion to the sacraments of the Catholic Church,—or by their predestinarian principles, combined with opposition to the episcopacy of an apostolical hierarchy.

It should be remembered that the further men remove from the principles of the Catholic Church, the further they recede

* Hence they acquired the name *Protestant*.

from the principle of unity—and consequently are morally more disposed to divide and separate. Hence the Calvinists by rejecting episcopacy, having thrown aside a bond of union, which the more Lutheran Church of England retained—have experienced greater difficulty, nay the impracticability of preserving even that appearance of unity, which the other till the present period has maintained. The Church of England on the other hand, having broken communion with the visible centre of unity—the Chief-Bishop of Rome, has lost that point of union, which the Catholic Church, by the ordinance of Christ, retains as essential to her existence as a universal church. The Church of England therefore finds it almost impossible to keep her members together in the unity of one body: and rather the fear of her enemies, than any common principle of union, prevents her at this day from splitting and falling to pieces. Whereas the Catholic Church, though assailed, at-

tacked, and insulted at every quarter, as foretold, (John xv. 20.)—calumniated by Protestants, derided by Deists, and disfigured by the vices of so many of her own corrupted members, rises upon her own strength above every threatening evil, and sees the impotent fury of her enemies only exerted to recoil upon themselves.

My Brethren, until the Reformation the English church formed a great branch of the Catholic Church of Christ, and in that quality communicated with all the other churches of the world in communion with her. She was a limb of the true vine—(John xv.) and abiding in it brought forth much fruit.—She shot her tendrils into every corner of these islands, and every cluster gave delight to the *husbandman*, because he saw that it was his own vine—the vine that HE had planted. But having been once severed by the destructive hand of SCHISM, with a hateful eye he now views the sickly sprouts, which issue from its fallen, crushed and broken

branches. *As the branch, he says, cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abide in the vine,—so this shall wither, and they shall gather it up, and cast it into the fire, and and it shall burn.* (John xv. 5, 6.)

My Brethren, it is by no means easy in a short discourse, to furnish a just representation of the actual state of the Christian world. Were I permitted however to describe it in the proportions of a picture, I would execute it in the following manner. On the right I would raise an edifice on those venerable and unshaken columns of catholicity, which for more than eighteen hundred years, have supported the Church of Christ, and which resting upon a rock will continue to sustain her till the days of eternity. Her four gates I would place opening to the four quarters of the world, through which multitudes enter, innumerable as the sands of the sea. And over them I would separately inscribe, ONE, HOLY, CATHOLIC and APOSTOLICAL.—Her priestly hierar-

chy, converging like the branches of a vine, into a centre of unity, in the Chief-Bishop of Rome defies the hand of schism. Above I would place the sacred emblem of the Holy Ghost, who incessantly watches and directs her councils.—I would then write in letters of gold this inspired line : **THIS IS THE HOUSE OF GOD, THE GATE OF HEAVEN.** (*Gen. xxvii. 17.*)

On the opposite side I would describe the rise and history of Protestantism, which even in the most favourable light that truth might give it, would offer images and shades, strangely contrasted with the beauties and symmetry of Catholicity. It would be necessary to represent it, under the appearance of a cluster of diminutive churches, all formed on the sandy soil of private opinion, and wanting the four divine characters, which distinguish the Church of Christ : I mean **UNITY, SANCTITY, CATHOLICITY, and APOSTOLICITY.** Contiguously to these I would also lay the ruins of those heretical churches, which Arius,

Nestorius, Eutyches, and many others had previously raised in the Christian era—Churches which once had their day, but now perhaps little other existence than what they can claim in the page of history.

Here must inevitably reign disorder and confusion, not less from the impossibility of fixing what is always and essentially variable, than from the difficulty of preserving in a connected state, that which by its nature, tends to division and decay. Such, my Brethren, is the outline of that picture I would place before you, but which the limits of a short discourse prevent me from executing. What however time will not permit me to complete in one instruction, by perseverance I shall endeavour to effect in several, and by successively directing your attention to the several articles of our respective doctrines, and the controverted points of faith, I hope to impress upon the minds of all, such conviction of the truth and sanctity of our religion, that the infidel himself shall

say, if I am to be a Christian, let me be a Catholic.

Entering upon this discourse, I recommended a fair and serious inquiry into the principles and doctrines of the different religions, which exist in this country ;—not that you might indulge a vain and idle curiosity, but rather, that by persuading you to seek the truth, I might enable you to find it. For a while then I will place myself in the situation of numbers, who born of Christian parents, reach the years of maturity, with no other sacred knowledge, than that which indicates the existence of a God, and that the profession of the Christian religion, is requisite for happiness hereafter. I will suppose that from the example of my family and connections, I have ranked myself a member of some particular sect, for instance, the Church of England. Blessed with strength of understanding, my own good sense would point out the impropriety of being ignorant of what I was openly professing ;

and consequently if determined to consider myself a Protestant, every argument derived from reason and prudence would call upon me to ascertain the nature and principles of that Church, of which I had voluntarily enrolled myself a member.

The very novice in the science of revelation, would inform me, that Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, made himself man, and died upon a cross, to cancel the sin of our first parents. That moreover he established the Christian Church, upon earth, and preached a body of doctrine, which was to be a rule of conduct for all his followers. This is that general notion of religion, with which numbers are satisfied, but ill does it correspond with an earnest desire to discover and learn those important truths, on which our eternal happiness is depending. Taking then a wider survey of that portion of the Christian Church, which comes within my observation, I should regard with some degree of astonishment the variety of sects and congre-

gations of which it appears to be composed. And the more attentively I directed my thoughts to this subject, so much the more forcibly would my reason and curiosity be excited to investigate the cause.

In pursuit of information, my first quere would therefore be—how did it come to pass, that the great Christian Church should be formed of such numberless societies? Was it so from the beginning? The answer of any sectary would be in the negative.—“Originally,” he would say, “the doctrine of revelation was deposited with the apostles; and as they had all learnt it in the same school, and from the same master, by the assistance of the Holy Ghost who descended upon them, and was to remain with their successors, they carried the unity of their doctrine to every part of the world, into which they penetrated. In the east, and in the west, in the south, and in the north, there was preached but one Gospel and one faith: which is properly what is meant by a re-

vealed religion, as we learn from our Divine Saviour himself. For he has promised, and most positively declared, that the pastors of his Church, guided by the spirit of truth *till the consummation of the world*, should be the oracles and the trumpets of his word: *who hears you, said he, hears me.*"

"However as by their contradictory doctrines the present teachers seem to be abandoned, we are at this distance of time, left to depend upon those lights, which the sacred Scriptures afford—yet there are none at this day, who can decidedly speak even to the authenticity of these writings*. Thus circumstanced, Christians have themselves sedulously applied to the study of those inspired volumes; but the result has widely differed from what their zeal had led them to expect. For each one explaining the sacred text, according to his own ideas and judgment, they have formed

* See the quotations from Dr. Herbert Marsh's Lectures in the Rev. Peter Gandolphy's Second Letter to him.

those different systems of faith and doctrine, which either wholly or partially become the basis of the different sects and religions in Christendom. And as all these separate societies conceive themselves right, so we may safely conclude, that truth is specifically attached to none."

My Brethern, I must entreat you to recollect, that I am reasoning as any sectary would and must reason, had a similar question been asked of him. In the supposed state of ignorance then, in which I have placed myself, you must allow it natural to feel some degree of discouragement in pursuing an inquiry, which in the outset promises so unhappy an issue. Even good sense, you will say, should persuade me to terminate so idle a research, after the true revealed doctrine, contented to retain the little wisdom and natural sense I already possess. Oh no! my Friends. — As this very mysterious appearance, under which I behold the divine religion of Jesus Christ, is a strong motive for further investigation,

I would study to become acquainted with every circumstance respecting the origin, history, and principles of my own Church. With this view I would attentively examine the COMMON-PRAYER BOOK, containing the thirty-nine articles of the Protestant faith, with the administration of the sacraments and other rites of that Church. If then, independently of the insuperable objection, that she found her way into the world fifteen hundred years too late to be the Church founded by the apostles, I shall nevertheless discover that on the strength of APOSTOLICITY, she claimed from all persons within these realms, submission to her authority, and ranked schism among the deadly sins which shut against us the kingdom of God,—and that exclusive salvation, fasting, and confession of sins form part of her doctrine—that whilst I contemptuously ridiculed these principles and practices, as unmeaning in others, ignorance concealed from me, that in quality of member of

that Church, I am tacitly professing and believing them myself, my mind would be alternately impressed with feelings of confusion, wonder, and alarm*.

In this state of perplexity and perturbation, my only resource would be to ad-

* See Common-Prayer-Book.

Days of Fasting and Abstinence.

- I. The forty days of Lent.
- II. The Ember-days at the four seasons, &c.
- III. The three Rogation-days, &c.
- IV. All the Fridays in the year, except *Christmas-day*.

Creed of St. Athanasius.

Whoever will be saved; before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholic faith, &c. See also Sermon XI.

The following Rubric is extracted from the Order of the Visitation of the Sick.

Here shall the sick person be moved to make a special confession of his sins, if he feel his conscience troubled with any weighty matter. After which confession, the Priest shall absolve him, (if he humbly and heartily desire it) after this sort—

Our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath left power to his Church to absolve all sinners, who truly repent and believe in him: of his great mercy forgive thee thine offences: and by his authority committed to me, I absolve thee from all thy sins, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

dress myself to the Pastors of that Church, who by the studies they pursue, and their very occupation in life, ought to be enabled to clear away every difficulty, and precisely speak the truth. I would therefore address to one, this plain and simple question: "Does submission to authority, together with exclusive salvation, fasting and confession of sins, constitute a part of the doctrine of the Protestant Established Church?" Never, my Brethren, would any one feel more puzzled to say, yes or no—If he answer in the negative, he must avow that Protestantism has already departed from what in the purifying days of Luther, had been established and decreed, as genuine scriptural doctrine, and consequently would be reduced to the awkward dilemma of admitting, either the fallacy of that first attempt to reform, or of denying the purity of the present system. On the other hand, if the answer be given in the affirmative, his own practice, his own better judgment, will convict him of

falsehood in a decision, which is also contradicted by every intelligent person in the land.

The answer must therefore be : “It was formerly the doctrine of the Protestant Established Church, but at present we do not receive it.” I should now, my Brethren, propose one more question to him, and the reply would determine, whether I was to pursue this inquiry through other channels, or renounce all belief in a revealed religion, presenting to my view nothing but inconsistency and confusion. I would therefore simply ask, if the condition of every other sect and church in Christendom was similar. Like King Achab, with his four hundred false prophets, he must say, “*there is one yet left of whom you have not inquired.*” There is yet one Church left—anciently the national Church of this kingdom, which pretends exclusively to teach that doctrine, first revealed by Jesus Christ. She styles herself Catholic, communicates with no other, and

no other communicates with her. Whether true or false, she is spread over the face of the earth, and her worship is of the most ancient kind."

Having advanced so far in the progress of inquiry, you may expect that I shall immediately conduct you across the line of demarcation, and entering upon Catholic ground with you, take a nearer view of the different objects which now claim our consideration. This, however, would be an undertaking of too great magnitude for the present day.—I shall, therefore, reserve it for a future opportunity, when time will permit us to contemplate, more at leisure, the simplicity, grandeur, and majesty which will then every where appear.—Laying aside, therefore, the character of a Protestant, which I had assumed, and once more professing myself a Catholic Priest,—as I have frequently, in the course of this instruction alluded with some marks of disapprobation, to the numerous divisions and sects of Christen-

dom, before I conclude it is my wish to address a few words to you, on the cause which has led to them.

Had Christians held fast that rule of faith, ordained by Jesus Christ, and still retained by Catholics, I mean the LIVING AUTHORITY of the Church, all would necessarily receive the same doctrine, and invariably profess the same faith. From the very beginning of Christianity, it was only whenever men departed from this rule, by substituting their private judgment, that heresy entered among them, and that unity of faith and doctrine gave way to extravagance in error and opinion. But though all heresies may be traced to this secret spring, yet never till the days of Luther was it openly advanced and established as the principle by which men were to be ruled and directed in religion. The consequences then foretold have since been verified. At the very dawn of what has been falsely termed a reformation, it was an observa-

tion of many Catholic divines, that the principles which were then laid down as the foundation of Protestantism, as the basis and rule of the reformed faith, were such as would inevitably tend, in the first instance, to split the fold of Christ into innumerable divisions, (of which this kingdom has furnished a melancholy proof) and would ultimately conduct to indifference for all religions, if not to positive infidelity. This consequence follows as necessarily from these principles as an effect from its cause; and we have unfortunately lived to see the prediction fully verified*.

* In the portraiture which I have drawn of Protestantism, I believe I have merely copied what has been already written by the best Protestant writers. Are all Protestants, writes Dr. Marsh, *alike* in their religion? Have we not Protestants of the Church of England, Protestants of the Church of Scotland, Protestants who hold the confession of Augsburg? Have we not both Arminian and Calvinistic Protestants? Are not the Moravians, the Methodists, the Baptists, the Quakers, and even the Jumpers, the Dunkers, and Swedenborgians, all *Protestants*? Since, therefore, Protestantism assumes so many

For having constituted the private judgment of every individual, that su-

different forms, men speak quite *indefinitely*, if they speak of it without explaining the particular *kind* which they mean. When I hear of a Swedish or a Danish Protestant (namely, one who belongs to the church established in those countries,) I know that it means a person whose religion is the *Bible only*, but the Bible, as expounded in the *Confession of Augsburg*. When I hear of a Protestant of the church of Holland, I know that it means a person whose religion is the *Bible only*, but the Bible as expounded in the *Synod of Dort*. In like manner a Protestant of the Church of England is a person whose religion is the *Bible only*, but the Bible as expounded in the *Liturgy and Articles*.—Protestants receive nothing as matter of faith and religion, “besides it (namely, the Bible) and the plain *irrefragable and indubitable* consequences of it.” But Protestants of every description, however various and even *opposite* in their opinions, claim severally for themselves the honour of deducing from the Bible “irrefragable and indubitable consequences.” The doctrine of conditional salvation is an “indubitable consequence” to the Arminian. The doctrine of absolute decrees, an “indubitable consequence” to the Calvinist. The doctrines of the Trinity, the Atonement, and the Sacraments, which the Church of England considers as “indubitable consequences” of the Bible, would *not* be so, if the Unitarians and the Quakers were right in the consequences which they *deduce* from the Bible. But the consequences which *they* deduce appear “indubitable” to

preme tribunal to which alone he is amenable for his faith and morals, those re-

them; and since they appeal, as well as ourselves, to the *Bible alone*, we cannot, according to Chillingworth's own definition, refuse them the title of Protestants."——(*Inquiry*, pp. 10—21.)——An authority speaking of the Protestant preachers in India, writes, "Are then the differences between those who believe that Christ is "very God of very God," and such as contend that he was a mere man, the son of Joseph as well as Mary; between those who believe that "his soul was made an offering for sin," and such as contend that he died only to bear testimony to the truth of his doctrine; between those who believe that he died for the sins of the whole world, and such as contend that he died only for a chosen few; are these differences so very insignificant, that a converted Hindoo (*or any man*) cannot well understand them? Nay, is it a matter of so little importance that such a convert cannot contemplate it, whether the sacraments of its institution, which appear from holy scripture to be *generally* necessary to salvation, be administered by those who derive authority for such administration from Christ himself, or from a congregation of mere believers? Is it a matter of indifference whether the glad tidings of the Gospel be first carried to heathen nations (*or to our own people*) by those who on every important article of faith and practice, "all speak the same thing, and having no divisions among themselves, are all perfectly joined together in the same faith, and in the same judgment;" or by those who, on almost every article of faith, speak different things, and

formists opened a wide and unbounded field for error, extravagance, and fanaticism, and the result is, that every one has assumed the privilege of teaching, believing, and acting as he chooses. Men are at once introduced into what is termed the liberty of the Gospel, and the question is now no longer, whether the Protestant or the Catholic has truth on his side, but whether Jesus Christ is God or an impostor—whether any credit is due to revelation, or the whole to be condemned as delusion, knavery, and deceit. These are now considered fair subjects for con-

represent the Gospel as a farago of contradictions, and therefore unworthy of the acceptation of those to whom it is preached."

"Our heterogeneous missionaries may indeed in India live together as friends, for fear of the heathen powers by whom they are surrounded, and carefully avoid all discussions which might endanger the public peace, and with it their own individual lives; but in that case they must conceal from the natives every topic about which they differ among themselves, and thus, if they be sincere in their respective opinions, they must be aware that they are "handling the word of God deceitfully."—British Critic, vol. XXXVIII. p. 584.

versation and discussion, and the Deist or anti-christian worldling is heard in society with no less attention, interest, and respect, than might be claimed by the wisest and most virtuous senator in the land. Nay more, the very luminaries of the established church have been known to profess their disbelief in that reformed doctrine which they taught—and whilst they preached the mysteries of the Trinity and Incarnation, have been heard to declare themselves disciples of Socinus and Hoadley*.

* “After all, the greatest benefit derived to religion by the efforts of the Reformers, is that doctrine which they so often disallowed to others, but which they found so convenient to themselves, of acknowledging the unrestrained right of private judgment in matters of faith ; and there is little risk in asserting, that whoever proposes any contrary terms or articles of union as necessary to be admitted, violates one of the leading and fundamental principles of the Protestant Reformation. “But this would lead to downright Socinianism, as the Catholics charge upon us.” May be so—the charge is not without foundation, notwithstanding what some excellent Protestants have written on the subject. This dreadful consequence may follow : it is a lamentable case ; but there is no way to pre-

In Prussia indeed, and the North of Germany, where reformation had shot a deeper root than in any other part, its disciples have already sunk into the depth of infidelity; and universities, in which virtue had once flourished as well as learning, no longer embrace the professors of Christianity. At this event, however, we have no reason to be astonished, since it follows as an effect from its cause. And I candidly avow, that were I to exchange the Catholic rule of faith to-day for the verdict of human reason, or private judgment, I must declare myself an infidel to-morrow. In the first place, I should absolutely deny original sin, and 2dly,

vent it while you allow the principle. You may issue your orders of Synods, Convocations, Conferences, and Acts of Uniformity—you may enlarge or curtail your Thirty-nine Articles—you may even pronounce sentence of "God's wrath and everlasting damnation" against heretics and schismatics; as long as you admit that ground-work of the Reformation, the right of private judgment, though you spend your strength in fulminations, and your skill in devising new terms of salvation, you will only be laughed at by the discerning Christian as inconsistent and intolerant." (Nightingale's Cath. Port. p. 134.)

all priestly or ministerial power of forgiving sin, either in extreme unction, confession, or baptism ; because reason and sense comprehend not such doctrine ; 3dly, I should disbelieve the real existence and presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist, because repugnant to the evidence of my senses ; 4thly, for the same reason I would deny the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ ; and next Christianity itself and the Trinity as absurdities—and who would have the privilege of objecting, if my right to judge, and consequently to decide, be an indefeasible right, paramount to every other motive?—In conclusion, then, and reverting to the subject which has been discussed this day, you may observe, that to none of these petty sects of Protestantism can you owe the homage of submission, since none have a just claim upon you for it. Reposing themselves upon the ruins of authority, the principle of dissolution is woven in their texture,—and consequently it is neither apostacy, nor

schism, nor rebellion, to separate from them.—Even the Church of England, which is the eldest of her heretical sisterhood, is a schismatical branch, a dead limb of *the true vine*, a rebellious child. On what foundation then can she ground her interdictions from schism? On what can she establish her title to authority, when she was the first to resist authority and become schismatical?

If any thing however, which has fallen from me this day, be thought to reflect too severely upon others, the apology I offer, and which I hope will be accepted, is, that I call God to witness, it was not spoken to their confusion, but instruction. It is the great interest I take in their eternal happiness which has induced me to think of them, like the good shepherd in the Gospel, who having lost the hundredth sheep, leaves the ninety-nine in the desert, and goes in quest of it till he finds it. That we may all meet and rejoice together in the glorious day of eternity, is my earnest wish and constant prayer.

SERMON XIII.

ON THE CATHOLIC CHURCH.

*And upon this rock, I will build my Church,
and the gates of Hell shall never pre-
vail against it. (Matt. xvi. 18.)*

IN passing from the consideration of Protestantism to the review of the Catholic Church, I should premise, that surrounded as you are by numerous sects of Protestants, each professing to lead you to the desired term, that is a happy eternity, though each pursue a different course, some choosing a path in which there are fewer difficulties to encounter, whilst others attempt to arrive at those regions of bliss by fatal tracts, to which their own fancy allures them,—you may perhaps imagine, that the Catholic Church is of the same description, and if other fabrics be not raised on the solid

basis of a rock, she also can only depend upon a moveable quicksand. These I fear are the sentiments of many, and therefore I wish to conduct you this day to that venerable temple, which exhibits to the *reflecting* Christian such evident marks of being the Church of Christ. In speaking however on this and other interesting points of religion, I have to offer one observation, that where minds are so various and opinions so opposite, it is often difficult, not to say impossible, so to reveal this light of truth, that whilst to all we display a sufficiency, it may not spread a glare too dazzling for the feeble sight of some. This is an unavoidable consequence. But surely in the cultivated and enlightened understanding the objection must yield to the superior advantage offered in the discovery and diffusion of truth. For to suppose a man averse to hear the truth would be to insult him in heart and mind:—and to impose silence upon truth, would be to dry up the springs

of knowledge and instruction,—to crush that reason which is the noblest faculty of man.

To lead you then into a knowledge of the Catholic Church by a correct conception of the word **CHURCH**, we may define it a congregation of persons, united by the profession of the same Christian faith, and participating in the same sacraments under the guidance of lawful pastors. This is a definition against which I believe few can possibly object, since in it nothing is included, which most Christian societies are not eager to proclaim to themselves. *

In the first place then, it is a congregation of persons, united by the profession of the same Christian faith. This, I believe, will hardly need an explanation. For as God is the author of all revealed doctrine, which is the object of faith, each revealed article

* This definition perfectly accords with the principles professed by Protestants of the Established Church; and particularly with those of the celebrated author of **CHURCH UNION**. See Sermon XI.

must be grounded on his authority. Indeed it would be blasphemous to suppose, that the God of truth, of sanctity and justice, would command us to assent to a contradiction—which must necessarily be the case however, if the sum of our belief be not one and uniform.

The word Church, 2dly, implies a participation of the same sacraments, which were instituted as channels to convey to the soul those special graces or moral helps necessary for moral life.—Thus baptism, was instituted to confer the grace of sanctification, — penance the remission of sin,—and the sacrament of the altar grace to withstand temptations, and new helps to advance in every species of virtue. But as these and the rest of the sacraments derive all their efficacy from the merits and passion of the Son of God, applied in this manner to the soul, they must all have received their institution, in the first instance, from Jesus Christ.—Consequently a distinction of sacraments would be so

essential a distinction of faith, as would necessarily argue a real distinction in the Church; and therefore a distinct Church;

The third and last requisite to form a Church, is subjection to lawful pastors. Pastors are as essential to a Church, as magistrates and ministers are to a civil government. They are the ministers of God accredited to his people, and empowered by him to discharge those sacred offices of religion, which no natural or civil authority can enable them to perform. It is not to the men, then, but rather to the authority with which they are invested, and the channels by which it has descended to them, that we are principally to direct our attention.—For Pastors without a lawful commission from God, would be no pastors at all. The commission of planting a church and preaching the Gospel to others, was exclusively conferred by Jesus Christ on the Apostles and their lineal successors. *All power, said he, is given to me in heaven and on earth ;*

going therefore teach ye all nations : baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost ; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you, and behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world. (Matt. xxviii. 18.) Most criminally presumptuous, therefore, would any one be, who should assume a character, to which neither fortune, talents, nor virtue, can give him a title.—He would be no other than the wolf in sheep's cloathing.—For if those who have been entrusted by heaven with this divine commission can only expect to succeed in executing it, through the promised assistance of the Holy Ghost, surely such as have grasped the crook without divine appointment, will lead their followers into the jaws of the wolf, and with them perish through their impious temerity.

Indeed, it is perfectly ridiculous to suppose, that because a man has assumed a particular dress, because he has devoted

himself to a certain course of studies, he can thence claim the privilege of guiding as shepherd the sheep of Christ. No—you must first receive your commission from him—it must be handed down to you by the Apostles and their successors ; *how can they preach*, writes St. Paul, *unless they be sent ?* (Rom. x. 15.) Thus, my Brethren, you see the necessity of lawful Pastors in a Church.—Without them, a Church must cease to exist ; and at this moment, were that long chain of Pastors in the Catholic Church to be broken, which so wonderfully connects heaven and earth, God and his people, the Deity must reveal to us new means of gaining heaven, otherwise salvation would be unattainable.

I have now shewn you, my Friends, what are the requisites to form a Church ; and you understand it to be a congregation of persons, united by the profession of the same Christian faith, and participat-

ing in the same sacraments, under the guidance of lawful Pastors.—If, then, you add these words, especially of Bishops, united to the Bishop of Rome as head of the whole Church, you will completely have the definition of the CATHOLIC CHURCH. By the commission which Jesus Christ gave the Apostles, of *preaching the Gospel to all nations*, by his promise of *abiding with them, and teaching them all truth to the end of the world*, it evidently follows, that these words were not only addressed to the Apostles, but also to their successors. Since therefore, the Bishops have at all times been considered the successors of the Apostles, to them has been entrusted the sacred deposit of doctrine and faith, and by addressing to them these words, *who hears you, hears me*, (Luke xvi. 16.) our divine Saviour has explicitly engaged to stand by them: nay is so bound, not only in justice to you, but to himself, whose honour de-

mands that the general body of those, whom he has really chosen to be the spiritual guides of others, should speak no language but such as flows from God himself—should lay down no principle but what is founded on the unalterable basis of truth.

Confiding, therefore, in the pledge which Jesus Christ has given, that this sacred trust will never be betrayed to the powers of darkness, or the enemies of his Church, every Catholic regards their canonical decision upon any contested article of faith, as the voice of God ; and mindful of the warning of our blessed Saviour, *he that despiseth you, despiseth me*, (Luke xvi. 16.) as far as religion is concerned, in humility submits to be directed by them. Among these, the Bishop of Rome, as Lord and Primate of the episcopal order, bears in his hands the emblems of jurisdiction and authority, (Matt. xvi. 19.) and governs the Church as the Suc-

cessor of St. Peter and Vicar of Jesus Christ.

Scarce any part of the Catholic doctrine has more opponents to encounter, than this recognition which the Church has made in all ages, of a primacy of jurisdiction, extending over the whole Christian Church, residing in the Bishop of Rome. That a man seated in St. Peter's Chair, to whom have been divinely entrusted *the keys of the kingdom of heaven*, should thence assume the right of calling upon the most powerful potentates to acknowledge his authority in those very territories over which they preside with uncontrouled power as lawful sovereigns, appears perfectly ridiculous. But that Britains, so justly jealous of their liberties and independence, should ever stoop to that degree of baseness as to own themselves the vassals of a foreigner, one that they could crush with the very finger of their might, is an idea which none but the insane could ever expect to see verified.

This is the language, my Brethren, you are accustomed to hold, and that, in which I and every well informed Catholic join, when speaking of a temporal superiority. Why then, you will probably ask, call upon us to admit an authority which yourself disclaims? Here, my Brethren, we misunderstand one another. Contending for rights which in their own nature are purely spiritual, as a British Catholic I abjure and protest against every attempt, direct or indirect, in a Pope, to establish a power over the temporal rights and properties of others. However, at the same time, that as a Catholic, acquainted with his faith, I would oppose every extravagant pretension of a Pope to raise a temporal dominion on the basis of his spiritual authority, I do not hesitate to acknowledge in him a pastoral jurisdiction, co-extensive with the whole church of Christ*. Whereas, guiding yourselves by a

*All Catholics recognize in the Pope the spiritual character of Chief-Bishop, Head-Shepherd, and Pastor of Christ's

distinct principle, because you justly spurn at the idea of submitting your temporal in-

Church; but surely that is easily distinguished from the character of a sovereign—a prince—a soldier—a civil legislator. The Catholics also admit a spiritual brotherhood and fellowship between themselves and the Catholics of other countries; for instance those of France; and believe that even those who die in arms against us, as children of the same spiritual mother, are entitled to, and benefited by our prayers; which in the true spirit of charity are offered for our enemies as well as our friends. But did any one ever hear, that this religious principle has led to confusion in battle; and that the right of church fellowship was pleaded to persuade Catholics not to fight and kill their Catholic opponents? Has a British general ever found by experience, that his Catholic soldiers were influenced in their duty by this religious maxim? Let Protestants, therefore, be assured, that as it is easy for the man in battle to distinguish between the character of a soldier and of a spiritual brother, so it is easy for Catholics to distinguish between the temporal and spiritual authorities of Popes and Councils, and to act upon the principle of that distinction. Till the year 1471, all Scotland was subject to the metropolitan see of York†:—yet bloody wars had frequently been waged between the Scotch and English.—And during the Heptarchy, the authority of the see of Canterbury was acknowledged in many hostile

† See *Wilkin's Councils*, vol. III. p. 606.

dependance to a foreigner, therefore you refuse, by a conversion of argument, to submit in religion to a stranger—erroneously supposing, that ecclesiastical jurisdiction is to terminate at, and depend

kingdoms, without any inconvenience to the temporal authorities : and such continually is the circumstance of the cities and provinces of Europe, owing to the events of war ; in which an extra-territorial spiritual authority is often recognized, where no temporal authority is acknowledged. If a prototype of this distinction from the old law can be considered as an illustration of the fact in the new, I will refer my readers to the 19th chapter of the 2d book of Chronicles. “ *Every cause,*” said Josaphat to the judges, “ *that shall come to you of your brethren that dwell in their cities, between kindred and kindred, wheresoever there is question concerning the LAW, THE COMMANDMENT, THE CEREMONIAL, THE JUSTIFICATIONS, shew it them, that they may not sin against the Lord, and that wrath may not come upon you and your brethren : and so doing you shall not sin.*”

And Amarias the priest, your high priest, shall be chief in the THINGS WHICH REGARD GOD : and Zabadias, the son of Ismahel, who is ruler in the house of Juda, shall be over those MATTERS WHICH BELONG TO THE KING’S OFFICE : and you have before you the Levites for masters, take courage, and do diligently, and the Lord will be with you in good things. (vv. 10, 11.)

upon those frontier lines of territory which princes may fix to-day and change to-morrow.

Here however it is impossible to argue by comparison, for the kingdom of Christ is one, whereas many are the kingdoms of this world, and there exists not more resemblance between the spiritual authority he conferred upon his Church, and that authority belonging to the temporal Governments of states, than between the dominion of Christ and that of any sovereign of Europe. *My kingdom*, said he, *is not of this world.* (John xviii. 36.) And it would be as great a folly in us to renounce the pastoral jurisdiction of a Pope, because his supreme patriarchal See lies without the territory of England, as to reject the religion of Jesus Christ, because it originated in Judea. Neither is it our business to question the propriety of Christ's having thus bestowed upon an individual a supremacy of jurisdiction, the utility of which must be evident to every reflecting

mind, as it connects by a bond of union the whole fold of Christ. It is for us only carefully and impartially to examine if such a power reside upon earth, and if it really exists to acknowledge it.

When our Saviour to reward the great ardour and love of his apostle Simon, had raised him to the dignity of chief of the apostles, he addressed him in these words: *Thou art Peter, (that is rock) and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of Hell shall never prevail against it. And I will give to thee the KEYS of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in heaven, and whatever thou shalt loose upon earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven.* (Matt. xvi. 18.) Thus he received from God himself, that supremacy of character and power which raised him above the rest of the apostles, and made him head of the Church, and Vicar of the Messiah. — And in the twenty-first chapter of St. John, after the resurrec-

tion of our Redeemer, Peter not only received a confirmation of that spiritual supremacy, but moreover an injunction to feed the *sheep*, as well as the *lambs*—that is, by another figurative expression, a language common to the Asiatic nations, was confirmed supreme Pastor and Shepherd of the whole fold of Christ. Now as the authority conferred upon the apostles was intended for the benefit of the Church, in all after-ages, *even to the consummation of the world*, (Matt. xxviii. 20.) the divine and unlimited jurisdiction, with which St. Peter was invested, necessarily descended to his successors, and exists in the present Bishop of Rome.

You learn from history that for one thousand eight hundred years, there has been an uninterrupted succession of Pontiffs, — and that amidst wars, pestilence and persecutions, or the intervening disorders of states and empires, the Church has always had a representative of St. Peter : — facts which not only mark the

special importance she has ever paid to this branch of her hierarchy, but which should also convince us that it has been divinely protected.

I will not here attempt to refute those idle and disgusting applications which heretics have made from the Apocalypse to the Bishops of Rome. — Suffice it to say, that these persons have all proved themselves false prophets: — that Anti-christ there prefigured is one personage, and can therefore have no reference to the number who have successively borne the crook of Peter: — that far from his chair being the seat of iniquity, with a few exceptions, the illustrious characters which therein have directed the fold of Christ, have shone the brightest ornaments of religion, and have even received the homage of the admiration of heretics. Consequently *as every city divided against itself shall not stand*, (Matt. xii. 25.) too ridiculous and absurd is it to suppose, that men, who have grown grey in the prac-

tice of virtue—men who have laid down their lives for the faith of Christ, as numbers have done, should have been the emissaries of Satan and the enemies of the Gospel.

Recapitulating therefore the definition I have given you of the Catholic Church, it is a congregation of persons united in the profession of the same Christian faith, and participating in the same sacraments, under the guidance of lawful pastors ; more especially of Bishops, and of the Bishop of Rome, or successor of St. Peter, as head of the whole Church ; on which account she is synonymously styled ROMAN CATHOLIC.
* Simple in its structure, but well calculat-

* The Constitution of the Catholic Church seems to have been the prototype of the British Constitution ; and when we contemplate the high veneration in which our Saxon ancestors held religion, it is not surprising that they should have considered the Constitution of the Church as the standard of legislative perfection, and consequently have endeavoured to model their own government upon it. It is well known that ALFRED, who is honoured as the founder of the British Constitution, was assisted in all his

ed to effect all the designs of God, this is that Church, my Brethren, of which

great designs by the advice, the learning, and the experience of the most able of the Catholic Clergy, who it is to be presumed would recommend that which they considered BEST. For it should be observed, that at the expulsion of the Danes, ALFRED remained in sole and full possession of a monarchy. Now as he afterwards voluntarily conceded a share of this authority to his nobles, (an act so contrary to what we know of human nature, that a motive must be assigned for it) and thus established a mixed government, we have reason to conclude that it was done with the design of forming the Government of the State on the model of the Government of the Church. —For certainly there exists too great a similitude, to allow any to suppose that it could have been the result of chance. I do not mean to affirm that the Saxon copy was as perfect and as finished as our Constitution at present ; but it must be acknowledged that a rough draft was drawn by ALFRED, that his conception was simple, bold, and grand ; and that it only required time, and the experience of ages, to render it what it actually is.

1. The King is the first Magistrate of the Realm, and has his own exclusive Prerogatives as Sovereign of the whole British Empire.

2. The word King is derived from the Teutonic

1. The Pope is the first Minister of God, and has his own exclusive prerogatives as Successor of St. Peter, and Head of the whole Catholic Church.

2. The word Pope is derived from the Greek word

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you have the inestimable happiness to form a part—in which, with peace of mind, ease, and safety, you may secure the sal-

word *Cyninge*, and signifies PAPPAS, signifying Father. *Powerful*.

3. Whoever lawfully fills the Throne of England, is King of Great Britain and Ireland, and Sovereign of the British Empire.

4. He is a temporal Sovereign, ruling in the power of the sword committed to him, and his kingdom is wholly of this world.

5. The principle of his government is unity and strength.

6. He is the common Magistrate of all his People, and they are his Subjects under God.

7. His office is to watch over the whole Empire;

8. To assemble and preside in Parliament;

9. To see that all his subjects are duly protected;

10. And that the laws and statutes of Parliament are enforced;

3. Whoever canonically fills the Apostolical Chair of St. Peter, as Bishop of Rome, is Pope, or Chief-Bishop and Primate of Christ's Catholic Church.

4. He is a spiritual Sovereign, ruling in the power of the *keys* committed to him, and his kingdom is none of this world.

5. The principle of his government is unity and truth.

6. He is the common Father of all Christians, and they are all his common Children in Christ.

7. His office is to watch over the whole Church;

8. To assemble and preside in General Councils;

9. To see that all the faithful are duly instructed;

10. And that the precepts and canons of the Church are observed;

vation of your souls, if you comply with her precepts and practice her doctrine.

11. And to exercise his just prerogatives of mercy in dispensing with the penal execution of the law, when a just cause calls for his Royal indulgence.

12. He is to govern according to the laws.

13. As he is also the depository of the executive authority, his power extends to every part of the Empire.

14. And on just grounds he suspends any magistrate from his civil functions.

15. He also plants new colonies, and appoints Governors over them.

16. The magistrate only rules and directs by the power of the sword committed to him by the State.

17. Though every magis-

11. And to exercise the just prerogatives of his indulging authority, by dispensing with their penitential observance when a good cause requires such *indulgence*.

12. He is to govern according to the canons.

13. As he is also the depository and fountain of spiritual jurisdiction*, his authority extends to every part of the Church.

14. And on just grounds he suspends any minister from his pastoral functions.

15. He also founds new Churches, and appoints Bishops to govern them.

16. The minister of religion only rules and directs by the power of the *keys* committed to him by the Church.

17. Though every minister

* Preseinding from the point of faith we here simply refer to the actual discipline of the Church.

I allow, that when viewed within the narrow and confined circle which surrounds

trate is the representative of God, yet the throne is the channel and source of authority.

18. The King declares war and proposes terms of peace; and places the refractory and rebellious subjects out of the protection of the law.

19. The King is represented by his ambassadors, who act with a delegated authority.

20. Under him also in the Empire there are Viceroy, Lord-Lieutenants, and Governors, who rule over Empires, Kingdoms, and Provinces.

21. The Empire is divided into Kingdoms, Provinces, and Counties; the officer of each having a local jurisdiction.

22. Under these also are Sheriffs, Mayors, and Con-

of religion is the representative of God, yet the Papal Chair is the channel and source of authority*.

18. The Pope pronounces absolutely on the schismatical and heretical character of persons, of books and writings; and places obstinate members out of the communion of the Church.

19. The Pope is represented by his legates, who act with a delegated authority.

20. Inferior to the Pope also in the Church, there are Patriarchs, Archbishops, and Bishops, who govern Patriarchates, Archbishoprics, and Bishoprics.

21. The Church is divided into Patriarchal, Arch-Episcopal, and Episcopal Dioceses; the Prelate of each having a local jurisdiction.

22. Under these also are Arch-deans, Deans, and Cu-

* See the note in the last page.

us in Britain, she offers little of that majestic splendour and venerable state, in

stables, each having charge of a particular district.

23. The King is the link of union to all the governments of the empire.

24. The King has also his privy Counsellors, who are his constant advisers.

25. With their advice he issues proclamations and orders of council.

26. With their advice he also ratifies the constitutional acts of national and provincial assemblies, in the distant provinces of the empire.

27. Every statute law must have passed in parliament, and received the royal assent.

28. Without the sanction of both no act can become the binding law of the land.

29. The law of the land consists of statute and common law.

30. The one is derived from immemorial tradition;

rates, each having charge of a particular district.

23. The Pope is the link of union to all the congregations of the Church.

24. The Pope has also his Cardinals, who form his perpetual chapter.

25. With their advice he issues bulls and decrees.

26. With their advice he also ratifies the canonical acts of national and provincial synods, in the remotest dioceses of the Church.

27. Every defined article of faith must have been defined in a general council, and have been approved by the Pope.

28. Without the approbation of both no decision is a defined article of faith.

29. Every article of faith is founded on the word of God, written or unwritten.

30. The one is derived from immemorial tradition;

which I should wish you to contemplate her: but to form some conception of her

by the other we understand the decrees and ordinances of parliament. by the other we understand the scriptures and the decrees of general councils.

31. Parliament is divided into two orders, or chambers; the Peers and the Commons. 31. The hierarchy of the Church consists principally of two orders—Bishops and Priests.

32. The Peers represent their Baronies. 32. The Bishops represent their Sees.

33. The Peers alone form a judicial tribunal, and they give judgment by an hereditary right. 33. The Bishops alone form a judicial tribunal, and they give judgment by divine right.

34. The law may be read, but its interpretation must be taken from the proper judges. 34. The sacred scriptures may be read, but their interpretation must be taken from the proper judges.

35. The nation decisively speaks by the voice of its Parliament. 35. The Church definitively speaks by the voice of her councils.

36. The King and Parliament are the highest authority in the empire, and from their decision there lies no appeal. 36. The Pope and general Council are the highest authority in the Church, and from their decision there lies no appeal.

37. A wilful breach of any imperative law of Parliament, is the crime of Fe- only. 37. An obstinate opposition to any article of defined faith, is the crime of Heresy.

real lustre and universality, you must recollect that her faith is the ancient faith of your island—that from the hands of *her* ministers your ancestors received the precious gift of Christianity, and for above a thousand years, under their zealous care, walked peaceably and happily in the paths of virtue and religion.—That in every church of the land, and in almost every mouldering ruin, you behold a sacred monument of the Catholic piety of your forefathers, where the same religious service was performed, and the same doctrine delivered, which you attend to at this day.

Independently of every other consideration, this alone should call forth the homage of that respect and veneration for every thing Catholic which it is so natural to feel, and usual to express for the ancient manners and customs of those from

38. A rebellious opposition to the authority of the State, is the crime of Treason.	38. A full renunciation of ecclesiastical authority, is the crime of Schism.
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whom we derive our origin. But, my Brethren, direct your views beyond the narrow limits of Britain, where undoubtedly the Catholic Church is rather to be admired for her firmness than courted for her prosperity, and see her extended over the rest of the world, with no other bounds than the earth. Traverse the Catholic empires of Europe, stretch across the Atlantic ocean, and contemplate her doctrine, now preached to nations in the vast tracts of America upon the ruins of idolatry and superstition. Penetrate, if you can, into the remotest corners of India—observe in every part the unity of her faith, and the similarity of her discipline. Explore the extensive and populous regions of China, in every province of which the Catholic faith is making a rapid conquest of souls to Christ, and adore that wonderful providence of God, which has ordained that like the ocean which abandons one part to carry its waters to another shore, the Catholic Church, ever fruitful in good

works, shall never fail to see her faith, which has been expelled from one clime, planted in another, by the labours of her preachers and the blood of her martyrs.

In this light, my Brethren, I would have you consider the Catholic Church, not as a sect of Christians peculiar to one country—or one of those numerous little societies which we see every where established, but as the massy pile erected by Jesus Christ himself upon a rock never to be overthrown. *Against her the gates of hell shall never prevail.* (Matt. xvi. 18.) Widely, however, as she is diffused, and numerous as are her members, (and within her pale she embraces infinitely more than any sect or society whatever,) still could she claim but a few centuries of existence never would I attempt to present her to you as the real Church of Christ. But coeval with Christianity, the very word CATHOLIC, inserted in the Apostles' creed, proves the antiquity of her faith, and the purity of her doctrine. Indeed by professing that YOU BELIEVE THE HOLY

CATHOLIC CHURCH, you give her a priority over all others, and solemnly acknowledge that as you have received her from the Apostles, so you look to her for the treasures of grace and the doctrine of the Gospel. Through the long course of eighteen hundred years she has never ceased to be the joy of her affectionate children. In prosperity she has appeared beautiful as the sun, fair as the moon,—and in persecutions has shewn all the dignified firmness of her divine Master, thus proving herself worthy to share his illustrious triumphs.

Venerable as she is for her antiquity, not less distinguished has she been in all ages, by the eminence of her saints and the blood of her martyrs. So conspicuous indeed has been her sanctity—with such lustre has it incessantly shone forth in millions of her members, and such heroic examples have they displayed of self abnegation and sublime virtue, that her most violent enemies and unwearied calumniators have been forced to confess

the unrivalled efficacy of that religion, which can thus triumph over the weakness of human nature, and exalt man above himself.

The next point I am to speak upon is the dignity of her ritual service. I admit that no worship, no devotion can be acceptable to God, but such as springs from the heart,—and with holy David I will grant that the prayer of a contrite and humble soul is more pleasing to heaven than the incense that rises from holocausts and victims.—Jesus Christ himself has told us, that the humble acknowledgement of the publican met with favour in the sight of God, whilst the ostentatious prayer of the pharisee became his very condemnation. But while you justly observe, my Brethren, that only the act which springs from the heart—that only the prayer which is formed in the soul, and has God for its object, can be pleasing and acceptable to him; you are not to conclude that an exterior splendor,

added to our religious worship of God, is any way inconsistent with those passages of Scripture I have just noticed.—It is not an exterior grandeur, when joined with real devotion and piety, that is there condemned, for the ceremonies in the old law were appointed by God himself, as you may observe by your Bible. (Exod. cc. xxv.—xxx.) No, it is exterior pomp and state when void and divested of true devotion, that our Saviour so justly reprobates. You all know and feel the sensations which affect the soul, when any exterior object strikes the senses—how majesty and grandeur impress it with awe and respect—how the harmony of music influences the whole frame.—On this account the Almighty, in the law which he revealed to the Israelites, paid such particular attention to the exterior dignity and ceremonial part of the Jewish worship, that it exceeded all other religions in pomp and magnificence, and from all nations did persons come to witness the grandeur of

their temple, and the splendid solemnity of their religious service.

The Catholic Church in the same manner, sensible of the majesty of that God she adores, and willing to give the homage she pays him all the solemnity in her power, has omitted nothing in the regulation of her service and the order of her ceremonies, which can add dignity to that august worship, and infuse into the breasts of her children a holy fear and respect for their Creator*. You must ac-

* "The absurd rigorists in religion," says Diderot, quoted by the Author of Sermons after Pentecost, "know nothing of the effect of external ceremonies on the minds of the people. They create an enthusiasm which I sometimes feel myself. I never witness the ceremony of a procession—the long line of Priests in sacerdotal habits; the crowds which precede and follow them in religious silence; the multitude prostrate on the ground;—I never hear their grave and pathetic music, without the strongest sensations of devotion, and without the tribute of a tear. I knew a Protestant Painter in Rome, who used to allow, that he never saw the Sovereign Pontiff officiate in St. Peter's, but he became a Catholic (*sans devenir Catholique*,") and adds the Philosopher, "if you suppress

knowledge, my Brethren, something singularly grand and striking in the holy sacrifice of the Mass. You need not be told, that it carries with it all the appearance of a sacred solemn act of religion :—and you are aware, that it often excites sentiments of great devotion, even in those who are not of our communion. And if the same may be asserted of every part of her service, how impressive, how dignified would you not own it, were you to witness the splendor with which it is attended in Catholic countries, and as it once was in your favoured island of Britain. With the Psalmist you would exclaim in the affections of your souls, *How lovely are thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts, how happy are they who dwell in thy house !* (Ps. lxxxiii. 2.)

The service which was then conducted with all the solemnity, that the orders of her hierarchy—the magnificence of her the sensible symbols, the rest becomes a metaphysical gallimatia, as varied as the variety of men's imaginations."

Essais sur la Peinture.

Cathedrals, *, the richness of her ornaments and sacred vessels could give it,

* "The religious structures, (writes Nightingale†,) that remain to testify the piety and magnificence of former ages, were erected in the unrestrained spirit of religious enthusiasm, conscious of extensive resources, and animated to exertion by every motive of temporal ambition, and of future hope ; and directed by a lofty ardour of conceptions, accordant with the character of the Catholic worship."

† The observer who compares the magnitude, the number, and the magnificence of the structures erected within the compass of three hundred years (between A. D. 1000 and A. D. 1400) with the progress of Ecclesiastical Architecture in England since the accession of Elizabeth, will find no hesitation in admitting, that within any twenty years of that period, a greater amount of architectural taste, and of wealth and enthusiasm to render that taste effectual, was called into action, than during the whole of the 17th or 18th centuries. The labours of Sir Christopher Wren, unremitted and extensive as they were, scarcely effected so great a progress in Ecclesiastical Architecture, as was conceived and executed by men whose names are now forgotten. The very conception of Henry the VIIIth's Chapel demonstrates an enthusiasm of feeling and a confidence in the limitless extent of his resources, that at once exalts the character of the architect, and evinces the spirit of the age, as operated upon by the

† Cath. Port. p. 237.

† Ibid. p. 239.

you now behold performed among yourselves in a more simple and plain manner,

character of its religion. Whatever may be the ultimate decision of men of taste on the comparative excellencies of Grecian and Gothic architecture, it must be admitted, that in England the productions of the admirers of the ancients bear no comparison, even as works of genius and taste, with those of the Catholic artists. Even St. Paul's, the greatest effort of English Protestantism, would not have existed but for the model and the example afforded by Catholic enthusiasm. And what comparison can even this structure, and many of the most celebrated efforts of the same architecture sustain, with the classical structures that, beneath the sway of Catholicism, have exalted modern Rome into the rival of its parent?"

"The religious enthusiasm of the people of Italy, and the peculiar bias of the Catholic Religion in that portion of Europe, were restrained and directed, by the models of ancient architecture continually occurring to their view, and operating with imperceptible influence on their architectural taste; but the northern nations, having no models to imitate, yet excited by the same devotional feelings, struck out a new path of architectural science, and by the united force of piety and genius, accomplished the creation of those mighty and picturesque structures, which strike the vulgar with awe and the judicious with admiration. Every form of grace is exhibited in these wonderful fabrics, ennobled by the most lofty magnificence, and varied by the most exhaust-

though not less pleasing and grateful to the Almighty. As Abraham's and Jacob's

less ingenuity. To him who estimates the excellence of a building by the rule and compass, or admits nothing to be excellent that was not invented by the Greeks and admired by the Romans, the beauty and magnificence of Gothic architecture may be invisible; but by all who possess susceptibility of feeling, or in whom a cultivated taste directs, rather than represses, the enthusiasm of sentiment, the productions of Gothic art must excite the most lively sensations of pleasure, astonishment, and veneration."

"It would appear, therefore, that the natural consequence of the Reformation has been to deprave our taste for Grecian architecture, to reduce the Protestants, even as the imitators of the classical models, beneath the level of their Catholic predecessors and contemporaries, to circumscribe the operation of that small portion of taste which actually remained, and to render their efforts even less successful and less extensive. It has also tended to retard the progress, and prevent the arrival at perfection of that style of Gothic architecture, which is in its present state so worthy of our admiration, and which, had the same stimulus to its pursuit, and the same means of advancing it continued to exist, would have, probably, been modified into a perfect system, as regular in its laws and proportions as effective in its combinations."

"The unfavourable influence of the Reformation on the arts, may be regarded, however, as more than counterbalanced by its propitious effect on the world of literature,

sacrifices on a stone in the open air were as acceptable in the sight of God, as the rich

That its tendency, indeed, was exclusively beneficial to the interests of learning, or the belles lettres, cannot be admitted; and that many of the revolutions in poetical taste, and on general science, must be ascribed to causes that would have operated had the reformation never been effected, it does not become the candour or the honesty of a Protestant writer to deny. The history of poetry, and the other departments of elegant literature, does not justify us in supposing, that its immediate operation was in any degree favourable to refinement of taste, or to the successful flights of poetical genius. The most celebrated poets and historians of modern Europe—men whose genius was only equalled by their learning and their taste—Tasso, Guarini, Metestasio, Ariosto, and Boccacio, were natives of Italy, and sincere Catholics.”——“The solemn and lofty character of the Catholic worship is chiefly observable when it ennobles their images, and exalts their sentiments. It would appear *à priori*, indeed, that the influence of the reformation on the poetical taste of the continental converts, must have been in some degree injurious. It dissipated the habits and the emotions that must have been impressed and excited by the frequent contemplation of Catholic magnificence, and by the frequent participation of the awful and magnificent ceremonies of the Church. In place of these it substituted an austerity of manner, which characterized even those individuals who had no regard to strictness of conduct, and taught even the most enlightened Protestants to regard

and numerous victims of Solomon in the gorgeous temple of Jerusalem, so your form of worship, my Friends, is as agreeable to heaven, as that which is paid to the Deity in the superb and noble fabric of St. Peter's, accompanied with the pomp and state of the Bishop of Rome. Which admission should suffice to convince all, that the Catholic Church in her religious service, does not confine her worship to exterior rites and ceremonies — her homage is pure and holy, and if any part appears otherwise to you, it is because you misunderstand it.

Having as briefly as possible spoken every description of tasteful illusion, or splendid display, as partaking of sinfulness and idolatry. Those pleasing associations which are the offspring of superstition, contribute to the excellence of every production of fancy, and animate and assist the strains of legitimate poetry. From the use of many allusions and images, also, of essential consequence to poetical effect, the continental Protestants were excluded ; and even in England a large proportion of the community regarded the " holy anthem sounding from afar," and the " full drawn tone of the organ," as relics of the most detestable idolatry."

of the public worship of the Catholic Church, I wish time would permit to say something on the excellence of her discipline: but I must pass on to consider the unity of her faith, which undoubtedly claims your admiration in a high degree. That faith which the apostles received from Jesus Christ, and which they transmitted to their successors, she in all ages has held fast, uncorrupted by error and unchanged by novelty. That faith which she here unfolds to you, is the same that she teaches in the wilds of America, and on the shores of India—so that from whatever clime a man may come, if he tells you that he is a member of the Catholic Church, you have an exact knowledge of what he believes. Which, wonderful as it may appear, is no more than the necessary consequence of true doctrine.—For since whatever is taught is founded on the authority of God, who will not and cannot deceive, it is impossible that any truth,

which he has revealed to his Church, should not be the same in the one part of the world as in another—the same in your understandings as in mine.

Relying therefore on the promise of Christ, that he will abide with his Church, and teach her all truth to the end of the world, (*Matt. xxviii. 20.*) a Catholic finds not more difficulty in assenting to any truth she proposes to him as an article of faith, than he would in admitting the oral testimony of God himself. And this is a submission which the Church requires from all her children, grounded on the sentence of Jesus Christ, *he that will not hear the Church, let him be considered as a heathen or a publican.* (*Matt. xvii. 17.*) You are no way constrained to be members of the Catholic Church; she disdains compulsion, and as you were free to enter within her sanctuary, you are at full liberty to depart. Your number can make no perceptible decrease in the fold of Christ, it would not be more missed in the

multitude than a few drops of water taken from the ocean. Remember then, it is in vain to pretend to belong to the Catholic Church, unless you profess her faith.—As I set out with this proposition, that a Church is a congregation of persons united by the profession of the same faith, so a difference of faith will indicate a distinction of churches, and resistance to her authority in one single point, separate you from her communion, according to the declaration of St. Paul: *him after the first and second admonition avoid, knowing that such a one sinneth and is subverted, being condemned by his own judgment.* (Tit. iii. 10.)

By having invariably pursued from the beginning this line of conduct, the Catholic Church has preserved her faith unaltered, and effectually secured it against all changes for the time to come. Her enemies may multiply around her; but firmly established upon a rock, with the eternal promise of Christ, that *the gates*

of hell shall never prevail against her, she remains unshaken amidst a host of foes, and through the protection of the Holy Ghost, who shall teach her all truth,—and abide with her for ever, (John xvi. 13.—xiv. 16.) placed beyond the access of error and corruption, she can never need REFORM. Raised aloft upon her immoveable basis, she is visible to the whole world; (Matt. v. 14.)—her unity in head and faith is the link of connection to all her members;—the living authority of her Bishops is their rule of doctrine, whilst the treasures of her sacraments flow incessantly through the channels of her Priesthood to multitudes innumerable, and conduct her millions to the mansions of eternal bliss.



SERMON XIV.

ON THE FALSE GROUNDS, ON WHICH
PROTESTANTS BUILD THE JUSTIFI-
CATION OF THEIR SCHISMATICAL SE-
PARATION FROM THE CATHOLIC
CHURCH.

*Dearly beloved, believe not every spirit,
but try the spirits whether they be of
God. (John, Ep. 1. iv. 1.)*

IN nothing, my Brethren, is greater caution requisite than in permitting our judgments to be determined by the impressions we have received in early education. At that period the young and tender mind is easily biassed—engraft but the sentiment, it will root itself, and grow up with the vigour of man. On this account, with great reason, many parents are extremely anxious that the first sentiments and ideas which are communicated

to their offspring should be honourable and virtuous, because, it is almost certain they will give a character to their thoughts and actions through the remainder of their lives. If then our conduct and judgments are liable to be influenced by the early impressions of infancy, how much does it become us, when advanced to maturity, to be circumspect in confiding to them, and to beware that our understandings are not made the sport of youthful prejudice. However, although this caution will meet the approbation of every prudent man, it is not generally noticed as particularly necessary on the score of religion. For, my Brethren, it is not less true than extraordinary, that the ideas men imbibe on religion during the period of their childhood and education, commonly constitute the sentiments they profess on that subject through the remainder of their lives; and that to a manly and instructive enquiry they seldom or never afterwards proceed. Whether it be, that

they prefer talking to thinking on religion, or conclude that no new information can be obtained on the subject, I will not pretend to decide. But certain it is, that as almost all determine without examination, so almost all must rashly judge by the impressions which have been first implanted in them. Now of all impressions, those of a religious nature are the most dangerous to act upon; since, by interesting the passions, they often delude the judgment. The matter too intimately concerns us ever to be viewed with indifference; and from being zealous it is easy to become rash; and often the mind vehemently defends, because the heart vehemently covets.

If for a while we consider the temper of men's minds on religion amongst ourselves, is it probable, nay is it possible, that any correct judgment can be formed of one Christian by the impressions which are taken from the heated imagination of another, of a different denomination?

Must not every such decision be, in the highest degree, both precipitate and unjust? Yes, undoubtedly; this candour itself will acknowledge. Nevertheless it is, I repeat, from these sources that men usually draw their information on religion, and it is of these materials that, for the most part, they compose those sentiments which are to give a character to the human heart. Prejudice, then, and not reason, must rule it in such circumstances, and to that should we principally ascribe those erroneous and suborned judgments which are so often given, and so violently urged against Catholics in this land. People indeed frequently express their astonishment at the prejudices which exist against them; but, for my part, I cannot help declaring my surprise that they are not more strong. For if it be true, as I have asserted, that these conclusions are generally formed without examination from impressions received from others, particularly those implanted in them during the course of

their education, it is impossible that Catholics should not be objects of execration and alarm. Ideas of this kind the very child draws in with his milk:—even before the light of reason has shot into his soul, he is taught to believe that the Catholics, invidiously called Papists, are a class of monsters. Is not every old nurse provided with a history of their abominations and bloody deeds, with which, for his entertainment, she diversifies her stories about witches and ghosts? Cannot she recount the horrid impieties they have committed, tell the thousands of heretics they have slain; in short, has not she learnt to talk of the Gunpowder-Plot, and repeat the long catalogue of Fox's Martyrs*? To the ominous matron succeeds

* The GUN-POWDER-PLOT was the scheme of a Protestant Minister to bring odium and reproach upon the whole body of English Catholics; and hence King James the First, in whose reign it happened, always called it CECIL'S PLOT. Though it appears that only nine persons were acquainted with the design of blowing up the Parliament House, viz. Catesby, Piercy, Fawkes, Winter, Keys, Bates, Tresham, and two of the name of Wright,

the reverend instructor, who loses no time in strengthening the pious dispositi-

yet the character of the whole Catholic body, has been since made responsible for the misconduct of men, who in the King's Proclamation were described in these terms :

“ Whereas Thomas Piercy and some other confederates, being of lewd life, insolent dispositions, and for the most part of desperate estates”——This trick had succeeded so well in fixing reproach and suspicion on the Catholics, that malicious as it was, it was again resorted to in the reign of Charles the Second by another minister of state, who contrived to make a fictitious plot, of one Titus Oates and a few accomplices, pass for the real design and act of all the English Catholics. (See Echard's History of England.)——As to Fox's BOOK OF MARTYRS, there never was a work that exhibited more internal evidence of being dictated by the spirit of darkness. His heroes in the first instance, seem all to have been taken into custody for riotous and turbulent conduct.—2dly, At the risk of their souls as well as their bodies, they gave answers on questions much above their understandings, with a pertness, an insolence, and a sacrilegious profaneness, which marked that they possessed more of fanaticism than virtue, and that to HUMILITY, the ground-work of piety, they were utter strangers. The whole work is a mass of FALSEHOODS; and I do not hesitate to declare, that it reflects both on the sense as well as the virtue of Protestants, to admire either the lives or deaths described in these *unauthenticated* accounts of Fox's fanatics*.

* See p. 108.

ons of enmity to Popery, which his pupil, unless he be a backward genius indeed, will certainly manifest. Every book put into his hands will be more or less excellent, in proportion as it can expose its deformity ; and the virtue of the youth, and his value to society, will be sure to keep pace with his hatred to Catholics. His playmates have all their strange histories to tell him on that subject, and if he do but enter a church or a meeting-house, to hear the word of God, the sound of Papist, Popish Superstition, and Romish Idolatry, so incessantly ring upon his ears, that his imagination becomes fired, and he concludes the whole of his religion must consist in hating them *. And how ma-

* We cannot be surprised at the hatred which Protestants bear to what they conceive to be the Catholic religion, when not a book is ever put into the hands of a youth, to instruct him in English history, which does not misrepresent and traduce the Catholics. I have heard it asserted, (and if any one will read "Whitaker's Life of MARY QUEEN OF SCOTS vindicated," I believe he will allow the assertion to rest upon a good foundation) that when

many thousands are there, who have never received any other religious instruction from their tutors and parents, if it may be so called, than what I have just mentioned?

Mr. Hume carried his manuscript History of England to the bookseller, with a draft of Queen Elizabeth's character, widely differing from the description he has since drawn of that sovereign, the bookseller informed him, that his portrait, though faithful, was so very unlike what the English were accustomed to believe of their VIRGIN QUEEN, that it would occasion a difference of five hundred pounds in the sale of his work, and absolutely shake his claim to *popularity* as an historian. Mr. Hume took the hint, carried his manuscript home, and wrote a second account of that princess, in which every feature is described with the pencil of a flatterer, instead of being faithfully drawn by the pen of the historian. But Whitaker has the immortal honour of tearing off the veil, and of exposing her genuine character in the hideous nakedness of its real deformity. Love of popularity, I fear, is a feeling which has influenced a great many of this country in their writings, and what in another state they will surely have to answer for, under the head of *calumny*. Even that Book, which every Protestant carries in his hand with him, into the presence of his Creator, THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER, pronounces the Catholic worship IDOLATROUS!!!

Such, therefore, being the impressions which persons generally bring with them into public life, we should no longer be astonished at the prejudices of many enlightened characters in the state, whose ideas respecting Catholics, usually betray such gross ignorance, and misconception, that we cannot help laughing at the portraits they pretend to draw, whilst we lament that men who can rise so great on one subject, should become so little on another. The whole tenor of their thoughts and actions proves that, like persons who have been frightened with the direful tales of spectres, they are haunted with the terrors of their own imaginations; and as the one can never think of a churchyard, or uninhabited castle, without perceiving walking ghosts and spirits; so the other can never separate the ideas of Catholic, bloodshed and superstition. Now, as this undoubtedly is not a very pleasant and Christian like temper of mind for men to indulge, and always occasioned by a

neglect of inquiry, so in a fair examination an effectual remedy will be found.— For I am not afraid to affirm, that, in spite of this mass of prejudice, Catholics are only disliked by those who know them not, and I never found the Protestant who was personally familiar with any, whether priests or laymen, who did not esteem them. Nay I have witnessed the most hereditary and deep rooted dislike converted into the strongest attachment.

Soliciting your kind attention, it is now, therefore, my wish to notice some of these charges, as the grounds on which many have pretended to justify their separation from the Catholic Church, or their breach of communion with the See of Rome: that is, in other words, to discuss the merits of that pretended reformation, which so unfortunately terminated in a schism between Protestants and Catholics.

The accusations brought against the Church of Rome, may, I believe, be reduced to these heads: universal corruption

amongst her members—superstition in her worship—and a systematic plan of making religion subservient to the passions of men—and lastly, I might add, the most heinous crime of idolatry.

Now, to get rid, as soon as possible, of this last grave and abominable assertion, that the Church of Rome is idolatrous, and which I know not on what principle of charity or justice, stands charged against her in the Common Prayer Book of the Church of England, I will only ask in what it is that her idolatry does consist? If by a leading article of our religion, we profess to worship and adore one only God, the Creator and Sovereign Lord of all things, who for ever lives in an indivisible Trinity of Persons ;—*neither in the heavens above, nor in the earth beneath, nor in the waters under the earth*, is there any object that can share the homage we pay to him. If we offer our adoration to the body of Jesus Christ in the Sacrament of the Altar, as we should do, was he carnally

present to us, under the shape of man, is it not wholly and solely directed to Jesus, the eternal Son of the living God, who is exalted in the glory of his Father? His merits alone, we believe, constitute the source of our justification ; and by his blood only our sins are washed away. Our faith teaches that no other mediation is available to appease the justice of our injured God ; and that not the joint prayers of saints and angels, not all the good works of men, will suffice to cover from his anger the smallest sin. God, therefore, in three persons, is the sole object of our worship, and Jesus Christ our only Mediator.

It would be unnecessary here to advert to the saints and angels, were not something perhaps particularly expected, on which account I shall simply state, that we honour them as the friends and favourites of God, through respect to him ; whilst their relics and images are only valued because they are memorials of them.

Yet both in this and every other subordinate gradation of relative respect, our minds and affections are immoveably fixed on that Supreme Being, who gave them existence. The charge of idolatry, then, which has been urged, contains a calumny of the blackest die; and consequently can be no just motive for separating from the Catholic Church. For Thorndike, a distinguished Protestant divine of the Church of England, justly maintains that whoever employs a pretext for leaving a Church is guilty of schism, and concludes the very first chapter of his *Just Weights*, by declaring that “all those, who justified the Reformation, by charging the Pope to be Antichrist, and the Papists idolaters, make themselves thereby schismatics before God.”

The next accusation we will examine shall be, that the Church of Rome is superstitious in her worship. Trusting that we are all agreed about the object and end of religion, which is the honour and wor-

ship of God alone, I believe the only difference of opinion will be respecting the most proper mode of rendering this homage to him. Persons, who criticise the style of worship in the Catholic Church, should reflect that it is not of modern date, nor according to European forms, but like all antiquated fashions, carries with it its own apology. Had the Church of Rome sprung up in the last century among the Protestant sects, undoubtedly the phlegm of northern temper would have given a different character to her devotion and piety ; she would not have clothed her service in so much show and parade, nor have been so fond of gaudy magnificence.

But whilst we prudently distinguish between European and Asiatic notions of taste, and advert to the manners of those countries, where Christianity originated, we also must remember, that 1800 years have made a great change in the world *.—When the Christian religion

* It is never more necessary to be cautious than in censuring and condemning the prejudices of others. Pre-

was first planted on the ruins of Paganism, the minds of men were so filled with the

judice is common to human nature—a consequence of education—a habit of mind.—In censuring therefore the prejudices of others, we often do it purely thro' our own prejudices, to which we are blinded. Prejudice must always be indifferent and harmless in itself, unless it controul and mislead reason — indeed this quality of the mind does not deserve the name of prejudice, until it thus improperly disturbs that faculty. It would be more becomingly styled PREFERENCE OF TASTE. Since, therefore, taste is simply a relative AFFECTION of the mind, dependant on the causes by which it is excited, we act against reason, if we refuse to others that right of preference which we claim ourselves; or if we presume to condemn the prejudices of others, merely because they are in opposition to those of our own choice. Upon this principle it follows, that we are not authorized to pass a judgment on the prejudices of other nations and times; for we should always recollect, that these dislikes and censures must be reciprocal, and that we can never condemn them, without being condemned in our turn. “Among the Chinese books, containing the rules of civility,” says a distinguished writer, “there is one which has upwards of three thousand, every thing being set down at large. The common salutations, the visits, the presents, the feasts, and whatever is done in public or private, are rather so many standing laws, than fashions gradually introduced by custom. Almost the whole of these public ceremonies may be reduced to the manner of bowing,

religious rites paid to their heathen deities, that when this coincided with the ordinances of God to Moses, it was judged proper by similar ceremonies and pomp to direct their attention to the true God*. The

kneeling down, and prostrating one or more times, according to the occasion, place, age, or quality of the persons; especially in visiting, making presents, or treating friends."

"Foreigners who are obliged to conform to these fatiguing ceremonies, are frightened with them at first, whereas the Chinese, who are brought up to them from their infancy, instead of being discouraged, are pleased with them, and believe that for the want of the like education, other nations are become barbarous. And that the observation of these customs may not wear out in time, there is a tribunal at *Peking*, whose principal business is to preserve the ceremonies of the empire, wherein it is so strict that it will not exempt even strangers from the obligation: for which reason, before the ambassadors are introduced at court, the custom is to instruct them privately forty days together, and exercise them in the ceremonies of the country; much after the same manner as our comedians practice before they come to act their parts on the stage." *Du Halde's History of China*.—*See also the Preface to the Liturgy, or Book of Common Prayers.*

* See Challoner's Preface to the Catholic Christian.

incense which had been previously offered to idols, was now burnt in honour of him whom the heavens adore. The ornaments which had clothed the Pagan Priests, hereafter became the sacred vestments of the Priests of Jesus Christ. Even the temples profaned by idolatrous worship, were converted into Christian churches; and so far from considering this mode of spreading religion superstitious, I should rather pronounce them superstitious who object to it. In the same sentiment the Protestant Thorndike perfectly agrees; for, blaming those whose unbending tempers will suffer them to conform to nothing, he says, "I shall prefer the wisdom of St. Gregory of Rome, by whom this nation received Christianity; ordering the Pagan festivals of our ancestors to be converted into the assemblies of Christians *."—"For the service of God accord-

* "In the change of religion," writes the judicious Burke, "care was taken to render the transition from falsehood to truth as little violent as possible. Though

ing to Christianity sanctifieth all times, all places, all gestures, all circumstances, that can pretend to express, to procure, to advance that attention of mind, that devotion of soul, wherewith Christians

the first proselytes were kings, it does not appear that there was any persecution. It was a precept of Pope Gregory, under whose auspices the mission was conducted, that the heathen temples should not be destroyed, especially where they were well built; but that first removing the idols, they should be consecrated anew by holier rites and to better purposes†, in order that the prejudices of the people might not be too rudely shocked by a declared profanation of what they had so long held sacred, and that every where beholding the same places, to which they had formerly resorted for religious comfort, they might be gradually reconciled to the new doctrines and ceremonies, which were there introduced; and as the sacrifices used in the Pagan worship were always attended with feasting, and consequently were highly grateful to the multitude, the Pope ordered that oxen should as usual be slaughtered near the church, and the people indulged in their ancient festivity‡. Whatever popular customs of heathenism were found to be absolutely not incompatible with Christianity, were retained, and some of them were continued to a very late period. Deer were at a certain season brought into St. Paul's church in London, and laid

† Bed. Hist. Eccle. l. 1. c. 30. ‡ Ibid.

profess to worship God, in spirit and in truth."

Having now pointed to the origin of these ceremonies in the Church, I must add, she has perpetuated them from two particular motives: first, because they make a great impression, by adding a sensible dignity to religion: and, secondly, on account of her decided aversion to every species of innovation. Her ruling principle has always been: *quod acceptum, hoc traditum*; what has been delivered to us, that we transmit to others. The business of reform is easily begun, but who can say where it shall end? Of this, I

on the altar; * and this custom subsisted until the Reformation. The names of some of the Church festivals were, with a similar design, taken from those of the heathen, which had been celebrated at the same time of the year. Nothing could have been more prudent than these regulations; they were indeed formed upon a perfect understanding of human nature."

Abridgement of Eng. Hist. c. 2.

* Dugdale's Hist. of St. Paul's.

think, events in politics, as well as in religion, leave us little to doubt. Since, therefore, such is the public worship of the Catholic Church, the only question is, is it superstitious, or is it not? I answer most positively in the negative. For not only are these ceremonies and rites the mere means employed of outwardly expressing to God the interior piety and homage of the heart, but were any of them superstitious, they would place us in contradiction with our own doctrinal principles, which declare every species of superstition to be highly criminal and unlawful, as our Catechisms and books of instruction will shew. Should persons then object to the public service and religious rites of the Church of Rome, merely because they are not exactly agreeable to their sentiments, let them coolly reflect how difficult it is to meet the opinions of a number on any one subject. Let them prudently examine into them, and not conclude that they must be superstitious,

as ignorant savages suppose—a mathematical instrument designed for witchcraft. The charge of superstition, therefore, is groundless and slanderous. In saying this, however, I merely allude to those Christians who are instructed and acquainted with their religion; for ignorance and superstition, like pride and weakness, will be found associated in every class of men*.

* There is no word more often used in an indefinite and improper sense than SUPERSTITION. In its true signification it implies that *false* worship, which sorcerers and magicians pay to secondary agents, and which terminate at them.—It also implies that *mistaken* worship and religious dread, which men of ignorant minds or deluded imaginations shew to particular objects, places, and occurrences, which, however, is less criminal than the former. But superstition is also a term very frequently but most improperly used, to express that worship which is paid to God, by religious rites and ceremonies. Superstition I have defined to be a *false* or *mistaken* worship, which is not referred to God. Whereas if all divine worship expressed by rites and ceremonies, be superstition, then the whole ritual and ceremonial law of Moses would be a system of superstition, prescribed by God himself. In the Catholic Church I know of no rite or ceremony which has not the sanction of a divine ordinance either in the old or the new law.

The next point on which I am equally ready to meet an adversary, is, that the Church of Rome has adopted a systematic plan of making religion subservient to the passions of men. This is a weighty accusation no doubt, my Brethren, but it is a calumny completely unfounded. In fact, the religion we profess, far from being a system incentive to the passions, must appear to those acquainted with it, wholly calculated to restrain them. Independent of its faith and doctrine, which are purely scriptural, embracing the most rigid precepts and sublime virtues of the Gospel, the discipline and government of the Church, in as much as they affect every order and rank of her members, from the highest to the lowest, have been regulated in her General Councils, with such wisdom and precision, that if men would but rule themselves and others by those canons and sacred decrees, the interests of religion and the state could never clash; on the contrary, happiness and virtue would

unite*. But we are men, and as such, shall always be faulty. It is not always the individual who carries the mitre, whose lamp burns with the oil of sanctity—It is not always he who has the law before him, who regards it. Those corrupted passions with which we are all born, will often make their appearance where virtue only should dwell, and the most holy ordinance will often be perverted to the vilest abuse. How frequently have we seen this observation verified in the history of the Jewish Church; I could instance the sons of Heli, I could instance the Pharisees: on which account Jesus Christ has chalked out for us the line of conduct to be pursued in these circumstances. *All things therefore, says he, whatsoever they shall say to you, observe and do. But according to their works do ye not, for they say and do*

* I conceive it is only necessary for a person to read the decrees and decisions of the Council of Trent, to admire the wisdom, care, and precision with which they are drawn;—they are models for legislative enactments.

not. (Matt. xxiii. 3.) That imitators of the Pharisees have been found among ourselves, nay that living examples may be produced, I am willing to admit; but they are evils the Church has always deplored. Much is she constrained to tolerate, when the remedy is dangerous, and not unfrequently impossible. *It is necessary*, says our Divine Saviour, *that scandals come*; that is according to the course of human things they must come.

I have at this moment in my mind many of these abuses, as they exist either amongst ourselves, or in Catholic countries; and deeply lament and deplore their existence. But do they originate in religion, or in the bad passions of its professors? Most assuredly not in the former, —most undoubtedly in the latter. Can that religion which counsels the renunciation of *all things*, be favourable to avarice? Can that system which prescribes continual warfare against the world, the flesh and all their concupiscences, which

continually preaches the mortifications and humiliations of the Cross, be friendly to worldly pride or sensual gratifications? But you ask, why are not men such as they should be? I conceive that those who have asked this question are themselves full able to answer it. Should secret pride, however, prevent them, I believe I can assist them with these few words—"It is because they are like yourselves,"—and subject to the same passions, often follow their dictates in preference to those of religion and virtue. Undoubtedly, my friends, this is lamentable; it is distressing to see men preferring the kingdom of this world to the kingdom of eternity. But such is our moral condition,—not less defective than the physical: and to expect a different result, we must change the nature of man;—we must banish from his heart those relics of original guilt; those traces of early prevarication; and we must give him a mind and a conscience

that needed not a Saviour. *I am not,* said he, *come to call the just, but SINNERS to repentance.* (Mark ii. 17.)

We are now to consider the last charge adduced against the Church of Rome, as a ground of separation,—universal corruption amongst her members. But, as I cannot take this expression in its full latitude, since even Protestants must allow that there are exceptions, it will be necessary, my Friends, for you to distinguish between the individuals, who may be vicious, and the Church itself, or the whole community. Therefore, although I am ready to admit that the bad ever have, and ever will form a considerable proportion in the Catholic Church, nevertheless this partial corruption amongst her members, can never be charged against herself, whilst it is not in conformity to, but exists in defiance of her doctrine, her precepts, and her exhortations.—The obduracy and sinful deportment of these, have ever been bewailed by the better

part, and at no period were there wanting characters, whose lives edified them with the examples of the most unblemished virtue. The lamp of holiness has never ceased to burn within her; and though numbers of her children have strayed into the walks of impure life, yet multitudes also have kept the ways of innocence and grace. Nay, in these very same walks of life, where many have scandalized their neighbour, the virtue of others has shone with peculiar lustre; and directed by that same religion, they have attained to a perfection of disinterested piety and character, of which we have no other examples in the history of the world. *Many are called, said Jesus Christ, but few are chosen.* (Matt. xxii. 14.)

So far, then, from condemning the Catholic religion, because the great majority of its professors are corrupt, that religion could not be recognised as divine were it otherwise—because it would either want an essential characteristic, portray-

ed by Christ himself, or would rest upon authorities evidently false, and God would want an attribute essential to his existence, that of TRUTH. For if *many* are not *called* where *few* only are *chosen*,—or if the bulk of Christians were not to follow the open road which terminates in perdition, Jesus Christ would not have foreseen with the eyes of God. Granted, then, that there was a great corruption among men at the period of the Reformation; granted that, at this day, in many Catholic cities and provinces, depravity of morals is more generally diffused than amongst ourselves, though God knows we observe too much: has the Church ever altered the tone of her doctrine? has she relaxed in the spirit of her precepts? But to bring the question home, I ask any one in this assembly, what should be done in these circumstances? Why they will answer, **REFORM—REFORM**, most undoubtedly, but touch not faith in reforming morals.—We all wish to **REFORM**, but to

effect this general reformation is the difficulty. If men are seldom so far blinded as not to see their own faults and errors, I ask not any adversary to point to the evil, but to shew us an effectual remedy. The work to be done is simple and obvious: it is to make the libertine chaste, the proud man humble, the voluptuous penitent, the covetous just; the Pastor attentive to his flock: but, I repeat, the difficulty is to effect all this. Though the way be straight, can you always force the stubborn animal forward? Jesus Christ laboured in vain with the Jews; St. Paul often laboured in vain with the primitive Christians; so did the other Apostles, and so have all their successors in the ministry. *Broad is the road, and wide the gate that leads to perdition, and many there are who go in thereat.* (Matt. vii. 13.) Extended corruption, therefore, was a vain excuse, an empty pretext for breaking communion with the Catholic Church.

Such, I believe, is the faithful and cor-

rect representation of things as they have stood from the beginning of Christianity in the Catholic Church ; and no period in her history can be named with which it will not be found distinctly to accord. It bears some near resemblance to a beautiful fabric, which displays the grandeur of ancient magnificence, but whose sculptured walls and cornished roof lodge the dust of ages and the spider's web. So stood the Church of Christ in the year 1517, when this circumstance drew the attention of a bold and aspiring man, whose impetuous soul would have been greater had it not been rash. This man was Luther. Contemplating the fair structure, he exclaimed with a well-ordered zeal, "Is it not a reproach that such a noble edifice should be thus disfigured with cobwebs and soil?" and immediately conceived the mighty plan of clearing it away.

But however praise-worthy the design, in the attempt he failed. Some parts were placed beyond the reach of ac-

cess, in others the raised work itself presented an impediment. Impatient and furious with disappointment, he at once lays the axe to the foundation, and determines to level the whole with the ground. Here the real master and guardian interferes, and exposing to him those pontifical keys which marked both possession and authority, commanded him to desist; at the same time upbraiding him with the impiety and folly of destroying a fabric, because he could not, as he intended, remove the dust which it harboured. Yet he impiously persisted; nay, in part succeeded, and with the materials collected from the old, formed that shapeless edifice of Protestantism, which afterwards became the contested inheritance of his associates.

This is a short but faithful sketch of what has been acted in the pretended Reformation, in which every thing was carried by violence and passion. When the imagination becomes inflamed, reason is little heard. I have already admitted

that at the period to which we allude there were undoubtedly some grievances in the discipline of the Church, which called loudly for a remedy; especially on the subject of its ministers, and the abuse of indulgences*, which admission may be

* That the Church wished to correct these and all other abuses, is evident from the following decisions of the Council of Trent.

“ It is to be wished that those who become Bishops should know what is required of them, and understand that they have not been called to that office for their own benefit, nor that they might live in riches and luxury, but that they might seek and labour for the glory of God. Neither is it doubtful, that the rest of the faithful will be more easily excited to religion and innocence, when they observe those who are placed over them, intent on the kingdom of God and the salvation of souls, instead of worldly concerns. As the holy Synod sees this to be particularly essential to the restoration of ecclesiastical discipline, it admonishes all Bishops frequently to reflect upon it, and in every work and action of life (which may be considered a species of instruction) to comport themselves in a manner worthy of their vocation: but first, let them so regulate their whole conduct, that others may discover in them examples of frugality, modesty, and chastity, and what renders us so pleasing to God, of humility.—This holy Synod also decrees, that what has been said respecting Bishops, is addressed not only to

applicable in part at this very day, to particular provinces and countries. I have

those who hold ecclesiastical benefices, whether secular or regular, whatever be their rank, but also to the Cardinals of the holy Roman Church: for as the government of the whole Church rests upon them, in quality of counsellors of his Holiness the Pope, they would be very culpable, were they not to shine by their lives and virtues, who by their station have the eyes of all directed upon them." (Sess. xxv. de Ref. c. 1.)

"The holy Synod, desirous of removing and correcting those abuses which have taken place *in the granting of indulgences*, by which an occasion has been given for heretics to speak blasphemously of the very name, has unreservedly ordained by the present decree, that all nefarious profit for procuring them, which has given rise to so many abuses among Christians, shall be entirely abolished. But as to such as are occasioned through superstition, ignorance, irreverence, or in any other manner, and cannot without great difficulty be specially prevented, owing to erroneous notions peculiar to those places or provinces where they are practised—it commands all Bishops diligently to collect all such abuses existing in their dioceses, and to make report of them in the first provincial Synod: that after taking the opinion of the other Bishops, they may be immediately laid before the Sovereign Pontiff, in order that, by his authority and discretion, such steps may be taken as are beneficial to the whole Church: so that the advantages of these holy indulgences may be piously, religiously, and without profit dispensed to all the faithful." (Sess. xxv. de Reform. Decret. de Indul.)

moreover acknowledged, that where a laudable zeal for the honour of God's Church, and the good of souls, first prompted Luther and his associates to labour in the correction of these abuses, they are deserving of that praise which I will refuse the good intentions of none. But it is their want of humility, their pride of soul which we must condemn; for when they perceived that their exertions were not crowned with the merited success, they should not have suffered indignation and passion to hurry them on to the extravagant idea of destroying what they had intended to improve. For it should never be forgotten, that Luther and his associates came forward in the business of REFORM without any divine commission: they had no testimonials of credit to produce, no miracles to bear witness to their unauthorized assumption of power. But self-commissioned, self-delegated, they thrust their sickles into another man's harvest, and with the re-

bellious spirits of Dathan and Abiron (Num. xvi.) *protested* against the interference of authority.

The restoration of ancient discipline by the correction of all abuses, is an event which, as I first observed, has always been desired. “Who will grant me,” cries St. Bernard, “to see before I die, the Church of God, such as it was in primitive times.” (*Ep. ad Pap. Eug.*) But when we observe men setting aside all decency and regard to truth, when we behold them with rage and malice wantonly attacking the faith of the Church, and renouncing all submission to her authority, oh ! if this is to be a reformation, verily the cure is worse than the disease *. It is far from my wish to

* To give some notion of the temper of mind, with which they prosecuted their imaginary reformation, I will quote some passages from Luther’s own works. “If Carlostadius,” says he, “or any man else, could, five years ago, have convinced me, that there is nothing in the sacrament but bread and wine, he would have wonderfully obliged me; for I was examining this point with wonderful anxiety, and laboured with all my force to get clear of the difficulty;

speak a language of retaliation: but I will ask, since so much has been said against abuses in the Church of Rome, is the Protestant reformed religion immaculate and pure? Are there no vices and abominations amongst any of her members? How has it come to pass that reformation has begotten reformation, and division has again issued from division?

Concluding this discourse I once again advert to the strong prejudices existing against the Catholic Church, and caution all who value their salvation, to suspend

because by this means I know very well I should terribly incommode the Papacy. But I find myself without hope of escaping, for the text of the Gospel is so clear and strong, that it would not easily admit of a misconstruction." (*Tom. 5. fol. 502.*)—Hear him again determining the question of discipline respecting the marriage of the clergy. "If a Council," says he, "should grant Churchmen liberty to marry, I would think that man more in God's grace, who during his life kept three concubines, than he who married pursuant to the Council's decree; and that I would command, under pain of damnation, that no man should marry by the permission of such a Council, but should live chastely, or if that were impossible, not to despair though he kept a concubine." (*Tom 2. fol. 421.*)

their judgments until, by the light of inquiry, they can discern the truth. *Dearly beloved*, says St. John, *believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they be of God.* (1 Ep. iv. 1.) Learn to make the proper distinction, between the faith and doctrine of the Church, and the corrupt practices of individuals; between what is fact and what is calumny. Loudly has the Church protested against the imputations of her enemies; with the royal prophet, she daily exclaims in the 43d psalm, *Judge me, oh God! and distinguish my cause from the people that is not holy, deliver me from the unjust and deceitful man.* Though vilified and made a term of reproach, though persecuted and become an outcast, she looks forward to the day of her exaltation with Jesus in heaven, because with him she has drank of the chalice of affliction. *Remember my words*, says Jesus Christ, *that I have spoken to you, the servant is not greater than his master. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute*

you. If the world hate you, know ye that it hath hated me before you. (John xv. 20. 18.) These things I have spoken to you that you may not be scandalized. (John xvi. 1.)—Rejoice, (therefore), for behold your reward is great in heaven. (Luke vi. 23.)



SERMON XV.

ON THE CHARGE OF IDOLATRY AND
SUPERSTITION IN THE VENERATION
OF PICTURES, IMAGES, RELICS, AND
THE USE OF HOLY WATER.

*Blessed is he, who shall not be scandalized
in me. (Luke vii. 23.)*

IT frequently happens, in the heat of argument and dispute, that persons more attentive to the solidity of their own reasoning, than to the conclusions of their adversaries, prolong a mighty war of words, conceiving themselves opponents, whilst, in reality, they are of the same mind and of the same sentiment. Since that unfortunate division of the old and new Church, which was brought about in the sixteenth century, such has been the warmth with which every question has been argued, that I am inclined to believe the parties seldom pro-

perly understood each other. Indeed, I am convinced, from observation, that a great portion of Protestants perfectly agree with Catholics on many points, on which they are supposed to differ, and could they but settle the terms, or words, in which they are to express their faith, it would be found very nearly resembling, if not exactly the same. Between the Catholic and the Protestant established churches, the partition is but thin, and, perhaps, with time, would have grown still thinner, had it not been for the ambitious and interested policy of a few, who laboured to foment discord, when peace should have been their offering,—who, instead of closing the wound, irritated the parts with every acrimonious application. God be thanked, however, it seems those days of religious animosity are fast disappearing, and I have reason to hope the time is not far distant, when we shall see the Protestant and the Catholic bury their past faults in a mutual love and esteem for

each other ; and if opinions respecting revelation must still divide them, charity will be found where unity is wanting. At present we often contend like enemies, because we conceive ourselves foes, when perhaps the point in dispute is conceded by all. But when interest and injury shall no longer attend to inflame the passions, our respective arguments will be proposed with temper, and weighed in the balance of equity.

There may be many who feel a degree of astonishment at the language just spoken, when I affirmed that on some points the Catholic and the Protestant were nearly if not perfectly agreed. But my Brethren, on the question I am going to treat this day, that which relates to sacred images and the ceremonies of religion,—a subject on which the contending parties have expended so much argument and labour, and which has been disputed at times with the greatest intemperance and abuse, our doctrine will be found in per-

fect unison. My object therefore this day will be to give that exposition of our doctrine respecting images, pictures, and the ceremonies of religion, which shall be intelligible to the humblest understanding; repeating as my text, *blessed is he, who shall not be scandalized in me.* (Luke vii. 23.)

There are three points of doctrine which are continually urged upon us by our adversaries, with a vehemence more than common to other subjects of dispute, and on which, many even ground the justification of their separation from the communion of the Catholic Church. They say, in the first place, that religion can never sanction or tolerate any superstitious practice:—2dly, that it is impious to give to any saint or graven thing any part of that honour which is due to God only:—3dly, that true religion does not consist in rites and ceremonies. These three propositions, as every one knows, have re-echoed from the pulpit and press, with a vast deal of noise through the kingdom, and have been

directed so pointedly at Catholics, that it is impossible, but the generality of our countrymen must suppose, we really maintain the opposite opinion. Their astonishment therefore should be very great when I affirm, and am ready to prove, that Catholics believe exactly the same thing: that we reprobate and condemn, with our adversaries, the contrary doctrine, as Antichristian, superstitious, and impious. We challenge them openly to examine our catechisms and books of instruction, our prayer-books, our sermons, our controversies, and to produce a single sentence of any Catholic writer, which authorizes such diabolical principles *.

* The holy Council of Trent declares, “ that images of Christ, of the Mother of God, and of other saints, ought to be had and retained in churches, and that due honour and veneration is to be given to them: not however through a belief that there is any virtue or divinity in them, on account of which they are to be worshipped; or that any thing is to be asked of them; or that any trust is to be reposed in the images, as formerly was customary with the Gentiles, who placed their confidence in idols; but because the honour paid to them is referred

Here then a great mystery lurks, some will say.—No mystery at all, my Brethren.

to the prototypes they represent. So that by the images which we kiss, and before which we uncover our heads and prostrate, we adore Christ, and venerate the saints, whose images they are. Which is sanctioned by the decrees which councils have passed against the opponents of images, and especially by the decrees of the second council of Nice.”

“Let the Bishops however diligently show, that through the description of the mysteries of our redemption, given by pictures and other images, the people are instructed and assisted in retaining and assiduously observing the articles of faith:—that great advantage is derived from holy images, not only because the people are reminded of what has been done for them by Christ; but also because through the saints of God, miracles and edifying examples are brought within the notice of the faithful, so that they may return thanks to God, for them, and form their lives and conduct to an imitation of the saints, and be excited to prayer and the love of God, and the cultivation of piety.”——“Where any abuses however have crept into these holy and beneficial practices, the holy council earnestly desires that they may be corrected; so that no representation of what is false in doctrine, or calculated to mislead the ignorant into a dangerous error, be ever exhibited.——Moreover let all superstition in the invocation of saints, the veneration of relics, or the pious use of images be abolished.”——“The holy council also ordains, that it is not permitted to a person in any place, even in

The fact is, it was necessary to deceive, and the attempt has been completely successful. The Protestants have become the dupes of their own instructors, and we have suffered in our character, through their credulity. I am far from believing, however, that, now a days, many are to be found in the upper circles of life, who lean to such illiberal sentiments. Good sense has taught them to discard these prejudices, and a personal acquaintance with Catholics, has enabled them to see the falsehood of such infamous calumnies. Yet numbers there are in the middle and lower ranks, who comparing what they hear with the exterior aspect of our reli-

the most private chapel, to fix an unusual image, or to keep it with that intention, unless it be sanctioned by the Bishop: nor are new miracles to be admitted, nor relics to be received, without his approbation and consent; as soon as he has any notice of which, after assembling in council his divines and other pious persons, he shall determine as shall be most becoming truth and piety."——(*Sess. xxv. De venerat. Sanct. et Imag.*)

gion, hastily conclude, in spite of the most solemn and formal protestations, that we teach and profess the doctrines which have been falsely attributed to us, by our designing enemies. The reflections, then, which I have collected on this subject, for the sake of perspicuity, I shall divide under two heads. The first will include all I mean to say of pictures, images, and relics;—the 2d will contain an explanation of the rites and ceremonies of religion. In giving this exposition of our doctrine, I have no other object than the justification and instruction of my flock; and an earnest desire to remove a cause of scandal to many of my fellow-creatures: and in my unfeigned endeavours to discharge this duty, I trust I shall merit the approbation of every candid and enlightened Christian.

The Church has two motives for sanctioning the use of pictures, images, and relics; first, because they are instructive, 2dly, because they are venerable.

Every one knows, but particularly the more illiterate, how easy it is to form a just idea of an event, when they have seen it represented in a picture. Language itself is not so accurate, so intelligible as the eloquence of shades and colours. Let the ablest orator recount the fury of combatants in battle, let him tell the distresses of the shipwrecked mariner, he will not do it with half the effect, as he who describes it on canvass. There, nature appears in no borrowed dress ; she is seen, she is known to all. She speaks in all languages, and neither study nor talents are requisite to understand her. Pictures, therefore, are the books of the ignorant, and often of the wisest ; for in difficult sciences they are frequently employed to effect what language cannot so distinctly ; and the mechanic, the mathematician and the philosopher will bear testimony to the aid they derive from them.

Like histories, moreover, they serve to deliver down to posterity the memory of

events, and every one will be ready to concede, that till the art of printing was discovered, and the people instructed to read, (and the last is a happy circumstance of very late date) they presented the most easy and effectual means of diffusing knowledge. Can any then feel surprised that the Catholic Church, which is as ancient as Christianity, should have adopted this method of spreading instruction among the faithful, and of teaching them the great mysteries of our holy religion? Can any be astonished that a Catholic Pastor, with this design, should hang up in his church a picture of the Nativity, Crucifixion and Ascension? If he does, it may be equally a matter of surprise, that these subjects should be explained to the flock from the pulpit. No, my Brethren, you must allow they speak movingly to the senses; and whether they represent any mystery of our Saviour's life, or direct our attention to the virtues of a saint, nothing can be better calculated to diffuse instruction and

devotion among the faithful. Hence the reason is evident why the Church has ordained that the Crucifix should be placed on our altars. It is not for adoration, but for the instruction of the people.

It is impossible that any one can behold the Crucifix, and not admit that it offers a lively representation of the great mystery of our redemption. There is no preacher, no language that can instruct you so well. Protestants frequently tell us, they don't understand the mass, — let them look at the Crucifix, — there it is all explained. The Mass is the repetition of the sacrifice of Mount Calvary, represented by the Crucifix. What I have here said respecting pictures and images, may also be applied to relics of saints, which we can never regard without calling to mind the great virtues which had distinguished their persons, and for which they are held up to the faithful as models for imitation. Let us now proceed to examine why they are venerable.

My Brethren, you will allow with me, it is proper to shew respect where respect is due. If therefore I can prove that such objects are deserving of veneration, you will not refuse to admit that we are right in giving it. Pictures, images, and the remains of distinguished personages, have such an intimate connection, with the objects to which they relate, that it is impossible but any insult or injury offered to them, must immediately reflect on the person to whom they refer.

To bring the question home at once to every man's understanding, by an example familiar to all, had an insult been offered to the image, or the remains of some valiant man, for instance, the Conqueror of Trafalgar, who so gloriously fell in his country's service, would not the indignity have reverted upon the hero?—Certainly it would in the general opinion of men, and if it be doubted by any, let them make the experiment in the presence of those who followed their chief to battle.

It is not likely that they would attempt it twice. On the other hand, whatever honour or respect is paid to these objects, devolves ultimately upon the persons who have merited such testimonies. Every thing connected with them acquires a relative value; and in proportion as it interested them, we esteem it. Thus it was in the hero just mentioned? Was there any honour or respect which his remains could receive, and they did not? Did not the very ball by which he met his death become a treasure from that circumstance? But let us turn from the field of arms to the theatre of religion.

If then such be the tribute which is paid to valour, surely virtue and sanctity are entitled to those honours which religion can bestow. Sanctity is every way venerable, as connected with God. If therefore sanctity be deserving of veneration, we are right in expressing it in the best manner we are able; and consequently when the Church proposes to our admiration the virtues of a

saint, now triumphant in heaven, it is just to give some honour to his remains ; since it is naturally reflected upon the person who displayed these qualities, and must ultimately render glory to God. We honour the relics of saints, because it is one of the means of outwardly expressing honour to the saint himself ; but it is that species of honour we should not have refused his merit when living among us. Might I not here instance the common custom of preserving the hair of particular friends ? But you will ask, if any example can be produced from Scripture to justify such veneration ? Yes, my Brethren, there are several. In the Old Testament we read that the remains of Joseph were carried by the Jews to the land of promise, through respect to that holy patriarch. (*Exod. xiii. 19.*) The Ark of God, the Rod of Aaron were held sacred, and Oza was struck dead for venturing to touch the former when in danger of falling. I might also mention the cloak of Elias, and the bones of

the saintly prophet Eliseus, which having touched the dead body of a young man, instantly restored it to life. In the New Testament we find a woman was cured of a bloody flux by touching the hem of our Saviour's garment. And the 19th chapter of the Acts informs us, *that there were brought from the body of St. Paul to the sick, handkerchiefs and aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the wicked spirits went out of them.* Here then is the example of the very first Christians.

From all that has been said, you may understand the honour we pay to images, pictures, and relics, is referred to what they represent. We render them not one atom of divine worship: it is a tribute of simple veneration which reason and religion approve. From the ceremony of kissing the Cross, therefore, on Good-Friday, will any be foolish enough to take scandal? Will they display such a want of discernment as to say the practice is idolatrous?

The Cross, as the instrument of our redemption, is dear to us ;—as the altar on which a man God was sacrificed, venerable and holy. All that we desire, therefore, is to express our gratitude to Jesus Christ for having redeemed us by the infamy of the Cross. We kneel down before the Cross, but we honour him who died upon it. We kiss the image, as a child kisses the picture of its absent parent, or benefactor ;—but our affections embrace him who was wounded for the sins of the world. So ancient is this practice, that we are told by Tertullian* and Origen†, who flourished in the beginning of the third century of the Church, that the Christians were reproached by the Pagans with worshipping the Cross, an evident proof they signalized their veneration for it by some exterior expressions of honour‡. This charge is

* Apolog. c. 16. † Contra Cels.

‡ In the fourth century, Julian the Apostate renewed the same reproach—a reproach which, were I a Protestant, I should be ashamed to learn from the enemy of Christ.

often repeated to prejudice the minds of the ignorant against Catholics ; but it is a charge repelled with indignation, and deserving of no better name than the foulest slander and most barefaced calumny. Fools, indeed, should we be, to think of adoring a piece of wood, for the act would be idolatrous and impious. Such calumnies, however, have often been thrown out against us, by those, from whom we had expected proofs of wisdom ; yet they have displayed all the folly and the ignorance of the vulgar. It is an old threadbare tale of those, who pretend to give an account of travels ; and when Rome becomes the subject of their faithless pens,

“ You adore,” said he, “ the wood of the *Cross*, you make this sign upon your foreheads, and you engrave it upon the doors of your houses.” St. Cyril, in his answer to him, tells him, that Jesus Christ by dying on the *Cross*, has ransomed, converted, and sanctified the world : “ the *Cross*,” he says, “ puts us in mind of it ; we honour it therefore, because it reminds us that we ought to live for him who has died for us.” *Contra Julian, lib. 6. p. 194.*

there every thing is placed in the shade of black superstition and idolatry.

At one time we are told the Pope was seen praying in secret to his idol, meaning the Crucifix;—at another, that he was worshipping a favourite image. Truly this is converting Rome into Babylon, and soon might we expect to be told, that the horns of the beast already appear. But certainly these persons themselves must be acquainted with the magic art, otherwise I know not how they can pretend to tell me what a Pope is doing in the secret of his soul.—His silent prayer is always what they refer to : for when he prays aloud, he is found to address himself to God. Shall I then say this language is incorrect, or that the persons are mistaken ? I wish this conduct was not deserving of a harsher qualification. But surely it is passing strange, that at their time of life and at this time of day, they should yet have to learn what every Catholic child is acquainted with—yet such must be their unlucky cast of

circumstances, unless their ignorance be tinged with malice, and we are to think they spread their slanders in spite of better information.—But, my Brethren, is it not common in the ceremonies of courts, to kneel before the throne and the person of royalty? Should we not laugh at the man who would refuse to conform to such a practice, thro' a scruple of idolatry?

I believe an improper translation of the Latin word *adoro* has given no little occasion for the reproach cast upon us; which however proves the wisdom and utility of confining the public service of the Church to one language. The Latin word *adoro* does not always express worship in English; its proper acceptation being in the sense of to respect or venerate. Do not the Scriptures inform us that Abraham and Lot prostrated themselves before angels and adored them. (*Gen. xviii. 2. 9. 1.*) Yet they were not accused of idolatry? But if merely an exposition of images about a Church is an indication of idola-

trous practices, I might bring the charge against almost every Protestant congregation in the country, since so many churches display them. Might not I also accuse the whole city of London of idolatry and superstition when the Cross stands aloft on its very Cathedral of St. Paul's, to the honour I affirm it, and not to the disgrace of the Established Church? On the other hand, have they not cause to blush, who have been known to pull down the Cross of Christ from their spires, and rear in its place a dragon, the emblem of the devil? Surely this may be called a diabolical piety. As to pictures, they are now found at least to be harmless, if not useful, and there are few churches of consequence which do not contain them. Indeed, opinions seem much changed upon this subject, and when a representation of the Crucifixion was fixing in the Abbey Church of Westminster, a Protestant clergyman was heard to make this sensible remark :—" Well, I now perceive we are no

longer ashamed of our redemption." Let us now proceed to the ceremonies of the Church.

The Catholic Church, in multiplying her ceremonies, had no other object in view, than the instruction of the faithful and the dignity of religion. We readily admit that true worship consists in bowing down all the powers of the soul before God, and employing them in loving him and adoring him. It is not necessary that any of the senses or members of the body be brought into action, the soul is the only part of us that converses with our Creator; hence however it would not be just to infer the inutility of prostrating ourselves in prayer, or expressing the affections of our heart in words; there is such a close connection between the body and the soul, that it is impossible but the one must be sensible to the feelings and dispositions of the other, and what makes an impression on the senses of the body will also excite sensations in the faculties of the

soul*. It was on this account, my Brethren, that Moses paid such particular at-

* "That one thought is often suggested to the mind by another; and that the sight of an external object recalls former occurrences, and revives former feelings, are facts, which are perfectly familiar, even to those who are the least disposed to speculate concerning the principles of their nature. In passing a long road which we have formerly travelled in the company of a friend, the particulars of a conversation in which we were then engaged, are frequently suggested to us by the objects we meet with. In such a scene, we recollect that a particular subject was started: and in passing the different houses, and plantations, and rivers, the arguments we were discussing when we last saw them, recur spontaneously to the memory. The connection which is formed in the mind between the words of a language and the ideas they denote; the connection which is formed between the different words of a discourse we have committed to memory; the connection between the different notes of a piece of music in the mind of the musician, are all obvious instances of the same general law of our nature."

"The influence of perceptible objects in reviving former thoughts, and former feelings, is more particularly remarkable.—After time has, in some degree, reconciled us to the death of a friend, how wonderfully are we affected the first time we enter the house where he lived! Every thing we see, the apartment where he studied, the chair upon which he sat, recall to us the happiness we have enjoyed together; and we should feel it a sort of

tention to the exterior splendor of the Jewish worship, and clothed that religion, which was holy and sacred in itself, in so much pomp and magnificence, that Pagans beheld it with admiration, and Alexander himself prostrated before the High-Priest of God.

In the same manner, my Brethren, the Catholic Church has been singularly at-

violation of that respect we owe to his memory, to engage in any light or indifferent discourse which are before us. In the case, too, of these remarkable scenes which interest the curiosity, from the memorable persons, or transactions which we have been accustomed to connect with them in the course of our studies, the fancy is more awakened by the actual perception of the scene itself, than by the mere conception or imagination of it. Hence the pleasure we enjoy in visiting classical ground ; in beholding retreats which inspired the genius of our favourite author, or the fields which have been dignified by exertions of heroic virtue. How feeble are the emotions produced by the liveliest conception of modern Italy, to what the poet felt, when, amidst the ruins of Rome ;”

“ He drew th’ inspiring breath of ancient arts,

“ ————And trod the sacred walks

“ Where at each step, imagination burns !”

Stewart on the Human Mind, p. 278.

tentive so to regulate her rites and ceremonies, that they might be explicative of what they represent, and throw dignity on the mysteries which are operating. She well knew that piety and devotion are affected by sensible objects, and, therefore, employed those helps which were most likely to excite it. I will leave it for any one, who enters a Catholic church or chapel, to say, if he does not feel a greater veneration for religion, than when he visits a meeting-house or chapel of ease. Does not her solemn service, in a manner, form the soul to devotion, and raise sensations which are produced by no other mode of worship? I could bring many eminent Protestants to confirm this assertion, who all admit, and seem pleased with the effect, but dislike the cause. Now this is a distinction which really I am at a loss to explain, unless they imagine, that we give more importance to ceremonies than they deserve. If any persons believe that we therein place the essence of religion they

are much mistaken. We tell you these ceremonies are employed as helps to religion, and that the understanding is never to confound them with it. Religion is the homage which the heart renders to God ; ceremonies are the forms by which it is exteriorly expressed. I can explain this to you by a very easy comparison : Every one knows that royalty resides in the person of the king, and not in his crown and robes ; yet no one can pretend to say, that he would appear more like a king without the latter : or that such appendages do not contribute dignity to his person, and impress respect on those who behold him.

My Brethren, I am convinced that on this subject, the Protestant and the Catholic are perfectly agreed, if we can make ourselves understood by each other. For there is no one ceremony in the Catholic Church, that we regard as essential to religion, if we except those which Jesus Christ himself ordained, in the institution of the Sacraments. For instance, the

using of water in baptism, or imposing hands in the administration of orders. After what I have said, will any then hereafter pretend to charge the Catholic worship with superstition, or empty pageantry? Some will ask, what then is the purport of all that fuss about crossing and holy water? There are many men who make a particular account of these ceremonies, whilst they are vicious in their lives and totally ignorant of religion, and the maxims of the Gospel. To these interrogators I reply, by imploring a little justice, and a little candour. We are told these persons are ignorant of the maxims of the Gospel:—be assured also, my Friends, they are likewise unacquainted with the principles of their own religion. There is a want of liberality in covering the characters of the virtuous and enlightened with the infamy and ignorance of the vulgar. They are not the data on which any one can form a correct judgment, and every

such decision must be the verdict of a subordinated and prejudiced mind.

The sign of the Cross and the use of blessed water, are of such high antiquity in the Church, that there is every reason to believe they derive their origin from the apostles *. This, however, is not of any

* "At every action," writes Tertullian, a father of the second century, "when we enter the house, or go out, in dressing, in washing, at table, when we retire to rest, or during conversation, we impress upon our foreheads the sign of the cross.—Should you ask for the scripture authority for this and such like practices: I answer there is none; but there is a tradition that authorizes it, custom that confirms it, submission that observes it." (*De Corona Mil.* c. iii. iv. p. 289.)—Origen, (*Select. in Ezech.* c. 9.) declares the same thing.—St. Cyril of Jerusalem recommends this practice to the faithful, (*Catech.* 4.) St. Basil, (*L. de Spiritu Sancto*, c. 27. n. 66.) calls it an apostolical tradition.—"In the sacrifice of the Mass, in the administration of the sacraments, in the benediction, in the whole of her exterior worship, the Church incessantly repeats *the sign of the cross*. Which is to teach and convince us, that there is no practice, no ceremony able to produce any effect but the virtue of the merits and death of Jesus Christ; and that all the graces of God, which we have, come to us through the sufferings of this divine Saviour, and the blood which he has spilt for us on the *Cross*."—

absolute consequence ; they are numbered among the rites and ceremonies of the Ca-

That Protestants have not wholly renounced the *sign of the Cross*, will appear from the Liturgy or Book of Common Prayers, notes pp. 2. 203.—In contemplating the ceremonies of religion, as well as in studying the canons of councils, it is absolutely necessary to advert to the particular circumstances in which they originated. When Christianity was first preached, the world was immersed in every species of superstition ; and the Pagans believed that the evil spirits or demons, had acquired such a power over the whole of the inanimate, as well as the animate creation, that they lived in the greatest dread of this influence, and supposed it could not be controuled by any human endeavour or precaution. Hence they were continually recurring to every kind of superstition, which the art of magicians and sorcerers could invent as a safeguard, always imagining that to be relieved from one evil spirit, it was necessary to seek the protection of one more powerful. Such was the abject state of slavery to Satan, into which nearly all mankind had fallen previously to the coming of Christ ; and such was almost the universal feeling of men, when Christianity was first preached to them. Their religion, their laws, their customs, their writers all prove the fact, as I have stated it. When the Gospel of Jesus Christ was first announced to them, therefore, as the preachers found it a much easier task to instruct the understandings, than to conquer the fears of their hearers, it became absolutely necessary to change this false and

tholic Church. The first we regard as a profession of faith ; the second is simply

impious superstition into an action both innocent and holy. They were, therefore, directed in all their temptations, doubts, and fears, to place their confidence in Jesus, who came into this world, by the sacrifice of the *Cross* to crush the power of Lucifer ; and hence, as Tertullian has told us, it became a continual habit among the first Christians, in proceeding to any action, to make *the sign of the Cross*.

The practice of *exorcising* persons and things seems to have had a similar origin ; and to have been designed by the Church to draw mankind out of those general habits of superstition, which had become almost natural to the species. Even the Jews, as we learn from the New Testament, appear to have been strongly inclined to fear the power of the devils ; and were continually bringing persons to Jesus Christ and the apostles, whom they believed to be possessed. Impressed with these notions, the new converts from Paganism were continually recurring to their old magical rites and incantations, by which they still imagined they could expel the evil spirits.—“ Nothing,” writes a distinguished author, “ is more frequent in the homelies of the fathers, than violent declamation against those who used fillets and charms for the cure of diseases—as also against some ridiculous amusements during the calends of January—against handsels—against vows also to fountains, to trees, and other species of superstitions, for which the councils, as well as the Greek and Latin penitentiaries, appointed particular penances.—It was therefore with a view of drawing the Christians from those

an act of faith. In making the sign of the cross, all that we intend is, openly to

abuses, that prayers and benedictions were multiplied, as we observe in the most ancient works. The saintly Bishops permitted some innocent practices without wholly approving of them, in order to extirpate others which were criminal. Thus St. Augustin preferred, that those who had a head-ach should apply the Gospel to it, rather than make use of fillets. "I commend you," he says, "when you have a head-ach for placing a Gospel upon it, instead of having recourse to a fillet. For as human weakness is such, we are easy when a man confined to his bed and suffering with a violent fever, has no other reliance but in the application of a Gospel to his head; not that it was designed for that use, but because he has preferred it to *fillets*." (In Joan.)—These remains of Pagan superstition in the converts, therefore, were loudly censured and condemned by their instructors, who told them, that as Jesus came to put down the power of Satan, at his *name every knee should bend, of those that are in heaven, on earth, or under the earth*, (Philip. ii. 10.) and that by solemnly invoking him, they would put all their spiritual enemies to flight. The Church therefore made this action one of her ceremonies, which she directed her ministers to perform. It was styled an *Exorcism*, which word according to Le Brun, signifies *adjuring* or *commanding*; and it was also viewed as a blessing; and water, over which these *exorcisms* had been pronounced, was called blessed or *holy-water*. The people carried it home to their houses,

profess our belief in one God and three persons ; and, that Jesus Christ died upon

sprinkled their persons and effects with it, and the Church used it publicly in preparing for the service of God.—Tertullian alludes to these exorcisms and benedictions, when he says, the waters *are sanctified by the invocation of God*. (De Bapt. c. 4.) St. Cyprian more distinctly says, that the water *must be purified and sanctified by the priest*. (Ep. 70.) And St. Ambrose speaks in detail of the exorcism, of the invocation, and of the signs of the cross. (De Initiandis, c. 5.) St. Basil places these benedictions among the apostolic traditions. (De Spir. Sanc. c. 27.) And their virtue is noticed by St. Cyril of Jerusalem, (Catech. 3.) by St. Gregory of Nyssa, (in Bap. Christ.); and in the Apostolical Canons, as they were arranged at the end of the 4th century, it is spoken of as instrumental in expiating sin, and driving away Satan. In her *exorcisms* on water, the Church also makes use of salt ; as one is the emblem of *purity*, the other of *incorruption*. Whilst using it, she also puts into the mouths of her children these words of the Psalmist, *thou shalt sprinkle me, O Lord, with hyssop, and I shall be cleansed ; thou shalt wash me, and I shall be made whiter than snow*, (Ps. 50.) which should be considered as a clear instruction to the faithful, to put their trust in God and not in the water ; which being mere matter, independently of faith and the prayers of the Church, can be of no avail. The custom of placing this *holy-water* at the entrances of churches is of the very highest antiquity.—Eusebius speaks of the practice, (Hist. Eccles. l. 10. c. 4.) and says that Paulinus ordered

a Cross for our salvation. The Cross is the sacred emblem of Christ: let me only

a *fountain* to be placed at the entrance of the Church of Tyre, *as a symbol of a sacred expiation*. St. John Chrysostom reprehends those who, in entering into churches, wash their hands and not their hearts. (Hom. 71.) Holy-water is yet in general use among all the Eastern Christians. — From what has been said, therefore, it appears that the blessing and use of holy-water is a practice of the very highest antiquity in the Church;—and secondly, that it was originally designed to wean and draw the people from sinful superstition. We, therefore, express some surprise that Protestants should not venerate with Catholics so ancient a practice,—or that they should consider that as superstition, which was intended and instituted to extirpate the remains of pagan superstition. “Most Protestant writers,” continues the distinguished author quoted before, “have laboured, very uselessly, to prove that almost all our ceremonies have been copied from those in use among the Pagans and the Jews: in which endeavour numbers have made a great ostentation of their learning, particularly such as were distinguished by an acquaintance with the Hebrew language: whilst others have confined themselves to what they discovered in the Greek and Latin authors. It was very easy in this manner to impose upon the vulgar, who were ignorant that the chief of the Pagan ceremonies were imitations of what constituted the real worship of the true God, and had been taken from the Hebrews, whose law was more an-

glory in the Cross, writes St. Paul. (*Gal. vi. 14.*) Hence we are accustomed to

cient than the most ancient part of the Pagan worship: whilst the remainder of the heathen worship was composed of the most gross and abominable superstition. That which would have been very proper, if referred to God, such as their offerings, first fruits, tenths, libations, and such like practices, was not what the Christians had imitated from the Pagans, for the custom was established among the Jews; and that which had any reference to idolatry was held in horror, and never tolerated among the Christians, as appears from the numerous ancient canons against the most trifling practices which seemed to originate in it. But it was no superstition, to change those practices which might be suspected to have thus originated, and to substitute others which had nothing in them but what was pious. Thus a Christian purified by the sign of the cross and by prayer, that which otherwise might have been defiled by Pagan ceremonies. Now the idolaters employed many practices, which were real magical operations, by which they assailed the Christians; and owing to those notions which the prejudices of education had occasioned, they were sufficient to disturb weak minds. The remedies applied in these cases were prayers and benedictions, which were frequently followed (in the beginning of the Church) by miraculous effects, to which the most respectable authors of antiquity bear testimony, and who are, it must be owned, more deserving of credit than many of the wicked of these days, who affect to view them as weak and contemptible. Such is the origin

commence and terminate our religious duties with this sign, which moreover serves to distinguish the true Christian from the enemies of his divinity, and unbelievers.—Holy or blessed water* is used by Catholics, and placed in their churches, to denote with what clean hands and pure hearts they should go into the presence of their Creator. There is also a grace or blessing attached to the use of holy water; but this is derived, not from the water, but the prayers of the Church, offered up when the water is blessed; which blessing must again depend upon the faith, and the dispositions of the person using the water; for it is only when such practices are joined with faith and sincere piety, that they are productive of any spiritual advantage.

of all the particular benedictions which the Church has approved, and through which the remains of a superstition spread over the whole world, have been extirpated." (*Perpetuité de la Foi*, tom. 5. l. 7. c. 6.)

* For the order and manner of blessing *holy-water*, see the Catholic Christian.

Here I must caution the more ignorant and uninformed part of my Brethren against those silly and ridiculous demonstrations of religion to which they seem so partial, and which are the sure marks of gross delusion: I mean, a variety of gestures at prayer; beating their breasts, frequent repetitions of the sign of the cross, and the mistaken notions they appear to have of holy water: by thus abusing these practices, you bring them into contempt, and expose your Church to that ridicule and censure which you so justly draw upon yourselves. My Brethren, I believe I can render this subject more intelligible, by placing it in the same light with the ceremony of blessing the standards or colours of a regiment; a rite which is common to the Protestant as well as to the Catholic Church*. The blessing is the effect of

* The Protestants of our Established Church seem to have rejected all *benedictions* except the following:

1. The blessing of children by their parents and instructors.

those prayers which are offered up to God in the name of his Church, that he would be pleased to protect those who should fight under these colours, and give them victory over their enemies. Now, would any one say, that it was superstitious to fight under these ensigns? He certainly would betray great ignorance, who should imagine he was to be defended by them, or that they could arrest the bullet in its course to his heart: yet undoubtedly, in the day of battle, he might recollect those

2. Grace at meals.
3. Churching of women.
4. Blessing of a church-yard or burying-ground.
5. Blessing, commonly called laying the first stone of a house or church.
6. Consecrating of military colours.
7. Coronation of the King.
8. Burial of the dead with prayer.

In the last of these *benedictions*, the Protestants carry their love of ceremony and show as far as the Catholic Church in any of her most solemn rites or processions. Why, however, these exceptions should be admitted by Protestants, we have yet to learn. Oh! what mischief has ensued from prejudice, the offspring of ignorance and pride!!!

prayers which the Church had offered in his behalf, and by placing his trust in the God of armies, merit that protection which had been implored for him. What I have said on this head will also apply to the practice of blessing ashes, palms, and other things; but I must remind you, they impose no absolute obligation on any one.

I trust this explanation which I have given of our doctrine will not prove unsatisfactory to my readers. In it, I believe, nothing will be found repugnant to good sense, and the ideas of the enlightened Christian, whether Catholic or Protestant. It must convince every one at least of the folly of attempting to learn truth from those, who through prejudice, want of knowledge, or some other motive, are interested in corrupting or disguising it. If persons who wish to be acquainted with the Catholic faith, would consent to learn it from Catholics, who might be supposed to understand their own religion, they would save themselves a

vast deal of trouble and perplexity, and avoid the disgrace of betraying that ignorance and confined information, for which they become objects of ridicule and contempt to the Catholic world. Let such persons always be aware that the Catholic faith being that of some of the largest and most ancient empires in Christendom, embraces thousands of the most enlightened characters, who would never continue in her communion, was she such as she is often represented. I conclude as I began, with the words of Jesus Christ, *Blessed is he who shall not be scandalized in me.* (Luke vii. 23.)

END OF VOL. I.

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The Author himself having been prevented from bestowing a regular Attention on the Press, is under the necessity of culling the Reader's Attention to the following

ERRATA.

Page 13, note, line 6, for Boyle read Bayle.	
— 17,	— 24, for parts read arts.
— 23,	— 8, for uncivilized read civilized.
— 40, note,	— 6, for giive read give,
— 70,	— 9, for imaginary read imagination.
— 72,	— 14, for gaul read gall.
— 85,	— 9, for religion can read religion alone can.
— 93,	— 7, for production read prediction.
— 122,	— 18, for Jesus Christ read Christ.
— 126,	— 17, for the read thee.
— 139,	— 11, for comprehending read comprehended.
— 141.	— 7, for this read that.
— 150,	— 91, for friend read friends.

ERRATA, VOL. I.

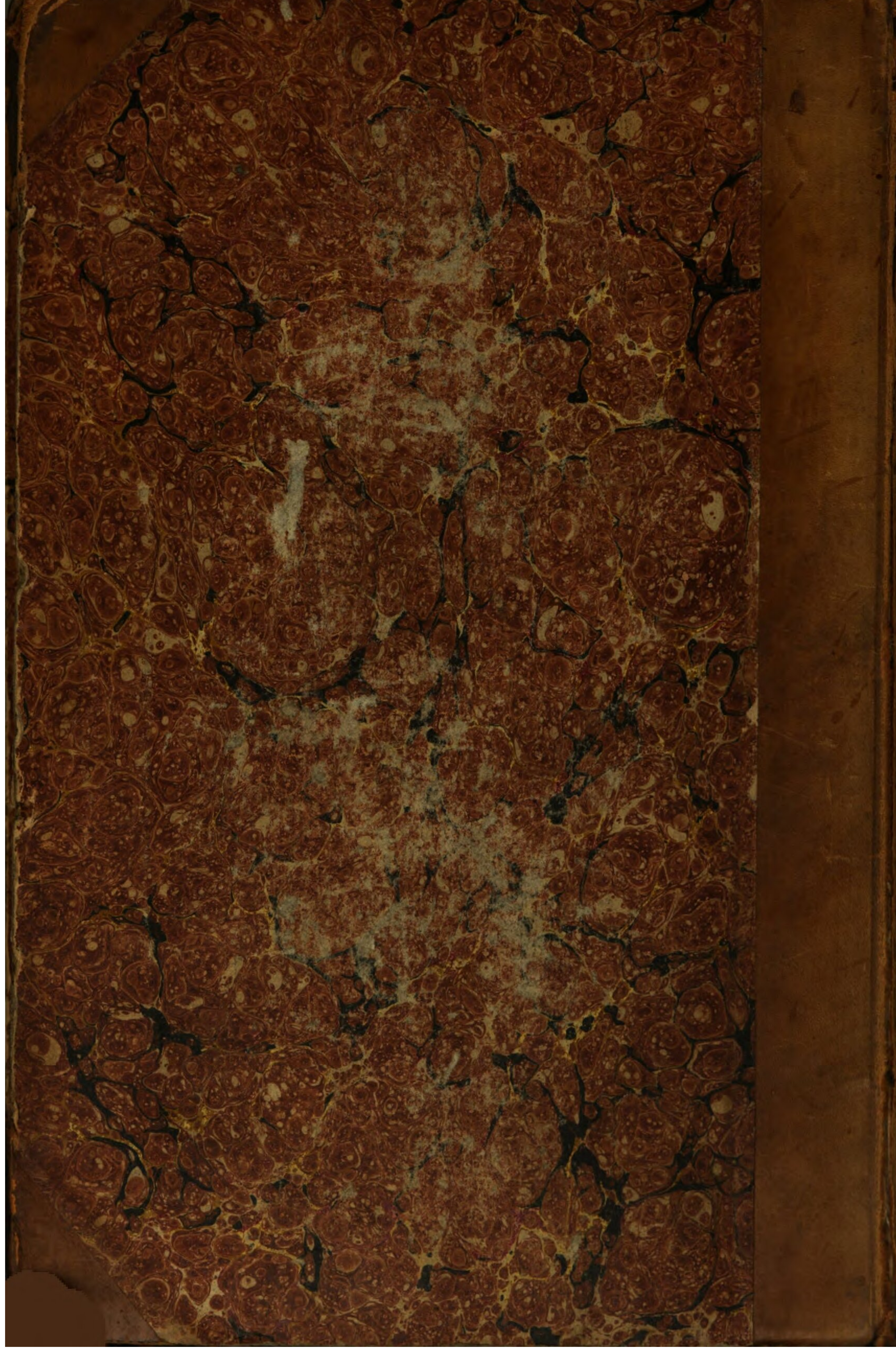
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- Page 21.—For, “*no where else but in the scripture,*” read,
“*in those scriptures only, and in that church.*”
- 102, Line 28.—Read, *by his consecration and second ordination, he also.*
- 117.—For “*two first persons,*” and *eternal effect,*” in the note, read, “*the first and second person*” and “*eternal image.*” The above inaccuracy is rendered clear by the preceding lines, wherein the Father is stiled the “*first person,*” and the Son the “*second person.*” In the original sentence, the term “*first,*” was used for *prior.*
- 169.—For “*the corner stone*” read, “*Jesus himself being the corner stone.*”
- 171.—Read “*the four Evangelists, two of whom were also apostles.*”
- 413.—No. 27, To “*approved by the Pope,*” add “*or must be a dogmatical decision of the Holy See.*”—No. 28, For “*without the approbation of both,*” read, “*without the approbation of the Holy See, no decision.*” No. 35, Read, “*by the voice of her councils, or her supreme head the Sovereign Pontiff.*” It is solely intended by the parallel in question to show that the Church has some likeness in the State; not overlooking the maxim, however, that *in similibus non omnia conveniunt.* Thus, to avoid the possibility of an erroneous interpretation of the propositions in Nos. 16 and 30 of this parallel, erase the words, “*by the church.*”—also, “*and the decrees of general councils.*”

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